

THE
ODYSSEY OF HOMER

RENDERED INTO ENGLISH VERSE.

BOOKS XIII. TO XXIV.

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LONDON:
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.
1882.

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THE ODYSSEY.

BOOK XIII.

ARGUMENT.

Ulysses arrives at Ithaca—The Hero and the Goddess—
Minerva transforms Ulysses into an aged beggar.

DAYS 35–37.

HE finished thus his tale; all mute remained,
Spell-bound with wonder, through the shadowy
halls;

Whereat Alcinous addressed him thus:

“As thou, O chief, hast come beneath the roof
Which high o’erspans my mansion’s brazen floor, 5
Thou shalt not go astray on thy return,
Though hitherto thou hast so much endured.
And ye who ever in my palace quaff
The purple wine, a draught for princes meet,

And list the minstrel's song; on each of you 10

I urge these words: for him our visitor,

'Tis true, rich robes lie in the polished chest,

And gold with cunning wrought; and other gifts

Which the Phæacians have offered him.

But come, let each of us a present add, 15

A massive tripod, and a vase besides;

Then, summoning the people, we will ask

A contribution: 'twould be hard for one

To bear the burthen of a fitting gift."

Thus spake the king; and they approved his
speech, 20

And each of them departed to his home.

And when the rosy-fingered Dawn appeared,

They hasted to the ship, and brought with them

Vessels of bronze, a joy to look upon.

Alcinous, the king, of might divine, 25

In his own person went on board the ship,

And saw the presents stowed beneath the beams

Clear of the rowers, not to hinder them

When stretching out in full swing at their oars.

Then to the palace of Alcinous 30

They took their way, and ready made a feast:
Alcinous the king, of might divine,
Offered for them an ox to Saturn's son,
Almighty Jove, the dweller in dark clouds.
They burnt the haunches, and the stately feast 35
They all enjoyed; meanwhile Demodocus,
The godlike minstrel, honoured of the folk,
Sang to them as they feasted: but the chief
Oft turned his head toward the glowing sun,
Longing that it might set; he yearned for home: 40
Thus yearns the labourer for his evening meal
For whom all day two oxen swart of hue
Have through the fallow dragged the heavy plough:
'Tis joy to him to see the daylight fade,
And wend to his repast; and as he wends, 45
His knees beneath him sink for weariness:
Thus joys Ulysses as the sun goes down.
To the skilled oarsmen, the Phæacians,
These words he spake with eager haste, his words
Addressing chiefly to Alcinous: 50
"Most Mighty Lord, the King, Alcinous,
And all of ye, God speed; and speed ye me,

When ye have poured libation to the gods,
In safety to my home: I have obtained
All that my soul desired, escort from you, 55
And loving gifts; which may the gods in heaven
Bless for my use; and may I find at home
My guileless wife, and all my dear ones safe:
And ye, abiding here, make glad for aye
Your gentle wedded wives and children dear; 60
Yea, may the gods grant you all happiness,
And may no ill the people e'er befall."

He spoke; they all applauded, and all gave
Assent to send the stranger on his way,
As he had spoken well. Alcinous, 65
The mighty king, the herald thus addressed:

"Pontonous, now mix for us the bowl,
And share the fragrant draught to all around,
And we to Father Jove will raise our prayer,
And send the stranger to his native land." 70

He spoke; the herald mixed the fragrant wine,
And passed it round to all; there as they sat
They poured libations to the blessed gods
Who dwell in heaven. Ulysses then arose,

The double chalice in Arété's hands 75

He placed, and spoke to her these winged words:

“O Queen, may happiness still wait on thee,
Until old age and death thee overtake,
The common lot of mortals; as for me,
I wend now to my home; may thou in thine 80
Live ever happy with thy children dear,
Thy people, and thy king Alcinous.”

As thus he spake, across the threshold passed
Godlike Ulysses, and the mighty king
A herald sent to guide him on his way, 85

Where the swift galley lay beside the beach.

The Queen Arété also sent with him

Her serving-maids to follow in his train;

One a fair tunic and a mantle bore,

Another followed with the chest secure, 90

A third one carried bread and ruby wine.

And when they reached the galley by the sea,

The trusty sailors from the maidens took

Theur burthens, promptly stowing them on board,

With all the food and drink: next for the chief 95

Upon the vessel's after-deck they spread

Blankets and linen drapery for him,
That he might softly sleep: he went on board
And laid him down in silence; and the crew
Their places took in order on the thwarts; 100
And through the hole pierced in the mooring stone
They slipped the hawser; then they all stretched out,
And tossed the salt sea water with the oar:
And on his eyelids slumber fell at once,
A sleep so still, so deep, it seemed like death. 105
As o'er the plain a team of stallions four,
Obedient to the lash together bounding,
With haunches lifted high, devour the way;
So by her speed the galley's stern was lifted,
And a huge purple wave roared in her wake, 110
As steadily she ran upon her course:
The wheeling hawk, the fleetest bird on wing,
Could not keep pace with her, as swift she ran
Cleaving the billows, and her burthen bore;
The chief whose wisdom matched the very gods', 115
And he whose soul erstwhile was wrung with woes,
And who through wars and gloomy waves had passed,
There tranquil slumbered in forgetfulness.

And as the brightest star of all arose
Which heralds in the early dawn so oft, 120
The gliding vessel-near the island drew.

A haven in the land of Ithaca

There is called Phorcys, from a sea-god old;

And from this haven jut two promontories

With rugged cliffs, which on the harbour side 125

Slope gently down, but break without the wave

Raised by the blustering winds; unmoored within

May lie the high-decked ships, when they have
reached

The tranquil bounds of that safe anchorage:

And at the haven's head an olive tree 130

Its leafy branches spreads, and near to it

There is a shadowy cave, a lovely nook,

Shrine of the Nymphs whom men call Naiades:

Within, the rocks are moulded into shapes

Of basins and of double chalices; 135

There hive the bees, and there are shafts of stone

Which spring aloft, on which the Naiads weave

Their azure garments, wondrous to behold;

And there perennial waters ever well:

And double is the entrance to the cave ; 140
The one for mortals slopes down to the North ;
The other, hallowed to the gods, looks South ;
On it no mortal man may dare to tread,
For the Immortals is this path reserved.

Thither, as if they knew the place before, 145
They drove their galley ; with full way on her,
She ran upon the beach for half her length,
Such was her speed from the strong rowers' arms :
Then from the gallant bark they went on shore ;
And first Ulysses from the deck they lifted, 150
Still wrapped in linen and a blanket fair,
And laid him slumber-locked upon the sand ;
And then they brought the treasures from the hold,
Which the Phæacian chiefs had given to him
To carry home, by Pallas' mighty 'hest. 155

All these they laid beneath the olive tree,
Close to its trunk, and from the path removed ;
Lest any wayfarer might chance to pass,
And rob Ulysses ere he should awake :
Then they went homeward on their way again. 160

But he who shakes the Earth did not forget

The threat he hurled against the godlike chief;
And with these words he counsel sought of Jove:

“O Father Jove, how shall I honour win
From the immortal gods, when scorned by men; 165
By the Phæacians e’en, my kith and kin?
For this Ulysses, it was my intent,
Should suffer many woes on his return;
And yet I never meant to wrest from him
All hope of home; since thou hadst promised once, 170
And given thy assent, that he should return.
But now these men have brought him o’er the sea
In their swift bark, even to Ithaca,
In tranquil slumber; and bestowed on him
Rich presents, bronze, and gold, and raiment fine; 175
More than he ever would have won from Troy,
If he had scathless brought its booty home.”

Then he who piles the thunder-clouds replied:

“Lo! what a speech is this thou utterest,
Thou Shaker of the Earth, thou mighty one; 180
The gods bate not the honour due to thee;
Hard would it be for him who cast reproach
On thee our eldest, and our most revered.

If any mortal, yielding idle trust
To his own might and strength, dishonour thee, 185
It is for thee thy power to restore :
Do as thou wilt, and all thy mind fulfil."

Him answered Neptune, Shaker of the Earth :

"Right soon would I have done as thou hast said,
Dweller in clouds of darkness ; but for this, 190
That I respect thy will and shun thy wrath :
But now I fain would wreck the gallant ship
Of the Phæacians, on her return
Mid the storm-clouded sea ; that they henceforth
May hold their hands, and cease to be the guides 195
Of all mankind ; moreover a huge cliff
Fain would I raise, their city to o'ershroud."

Then he who piles the thunder-clouds replied :

"O brother, to my mind this seemeth best :
Soon as the people from the city view 200
The ship approaching, driven by the oars,
Smite her to stone, and change her to a rock
In a swift galley's shape, close by the shore,
That all men there may gaze on her with awe ;
And with a mighty crag their city shroud." 205

As soon as Neptune, Shaker of the Earth,
Had heard these words, he went to Scheria's isle,
Where the Phæacians dwell, and waited there;
And soon the gliding galley, swiftly sped,
Drew very near: the Shaker of the Earth 210
Drew near to her, and smote her into stone,
And stretching out his hand with palm turned down
He fixed her rooted to the depths below;
And then he turned away, and went afar.

Those famous sailors, the Phæacians, 215
Addressed each other then with hasty words,
And, looking at his neighbour, one thus spoke:

“Ah me! who holds our ship moored on the deep
When she was rowing swiftly to the port?
And even now she was so well in sight.” 220

Thus said they, but they little knew her fate;
When them Alcinous addressed, and said:

“Lo now! a prophecy I call to mind,
An ancient one, my father told me of;
Who said that Neptune jealous was of us, 225
For that we pilots were to all mankind:
He said that therefore he would one day wreck

A gallant bark of the Phæacians,
On her return across the misty deep;
And with a mighty cliff he would enshroud 230
Our city: this the aged chief declared,
And all these words of his have come to pass.
Now all of ye obey the words I say;
Let us no longer escort give to men
Who visit this our city; to the god 235
Twelve chosen bulls let us now sacrifice:
May he be merciful! and may he spare
To shroud our city with this mighty cliff!"

Thus spake the King, they trembled in their fear,
And for the sacrifice brought forth the bulls. 240
Then all the lords and rulers of the land,
Standing around the altar of the god,
To Neptune, mighty lord, their prayer addressed.

Meanwhile Ulysses from his sleep awoke
On his own native soil; he knew it not, 245
He the long-absent one; for all around
Pallas, the child of Jove, a mist let fall,
That she might keep him yet unrecognised,
And she herself might counsel give to him;

So that nor wife nor friends should know him yet, 250
Ere he avenged in full the suitors' crimes :

And therefore to the chief did all seem strange ;

The stretching paths, the haven for the ships,

The rocks precipitous, and bosky woods.

He rose and gazed upon his native land, 255

And groaned ; and smote his hand upon his thigh,

And with these words gave utterance to his woe :

“ Ah me ! to what strange land have I arrived ?

And are its dwellers savage, lawless, wild,

Or gently nurtured do they fear the gods ? 260

And these my treasures, whither shall I bear them ?

And whither shall I guide my wandering steps ?

Why stayed I not with the Phæacians,

There where I was ? or of the mighty chiefs

Some other could I well have visited, 265

Who would have welcomed me, and sent me home.

And now I know not where to store my goods,

Nor can I leave them here, perchance for spoil.

Ah ! those Phæacian lords and counsellors,

I cannot say that they were just and true, 270

Who to this foreign land sent me astray,

When they had promised they would send me home,
To sunny Ithaca ; promise ill kept !
May Jove, the guard of strangers, who looks down
With eye all-seeing on the human race, 275
And punishes the guilty, punish them.
But first I will survey and count my goods,
Lest, when they sailed away, they took with them
Some of my treasures in their roomy ship."

As thus he spoke, he viewed and counted o'er 280
The tripods fine, the vases, and the gold,
And all the garments woven rich and fair ;
And naught found wanting : then, with many a groan,
Along the shore of the resounding main
He sadly crept, and wailed his native land. 285

Pallas approached him then ; the form she took
Of a fair youth, a guardian of the flocks,
Well nurtured, as a chieftain's son might be ;
A graceful robe athwart her shoulders hung
In double folds, and on her well-shaped feet 290
Trim sandals ; and a javelin in her hand.
Ulysses gladdened at the sight of her,
And went to meet her, and addressed her thus :

“O friend, as in this land thou art the first
Whom I have chanced to meet, I kindly greet thee, 295
And to our meeting bear thou no ill will ;
Protect from harm all this my wealth, and me.
At thy kind feet I fall ; to thee I pray
As to a god ; oh tell me now in truth,
What land, what realm is this ? its dwellers who ? 300
One of the sunny islands is it, say,
Or promontory leaning on the sea,
Out-stretching from the fruitful continent ?”

The blue-eyed goddess thus to him replied :

“O stranger, thou must be devoid of wit, 305
Or from a far-off land indeed hast come,
To ask what land this be ; not quite unknown
Is it in truth ; full many know it well,
Of those who dwell towards the Orient,
Or in the cloudy shadows of the West : 310
Rugged indeed it is ; scant breadth of plain
Can it afford to drive the courser fleet,
But yet not niggard is its soil ; here grow
In bountiful profusion corn and wine,
No lack of rain, or the refreshing dew ; 315

A land for goats and herds of cattle meet,
Wooded with trees of every kind of leaf,
And springs perennial well from out its soil :
In sooth, the name of Ithaca has reached
Even to Troy ; though, stranger, I have heard 320
That Troy is distant far from Grecian shore."

She spake ; the chief rejoiced amidst his woes,
Joying to hear the name of his own land,
Spoke by the child of ægis-bearing Jove :
He thus addressed her with these wingèd words, 325
Nor told her all the truth, but curbed his tongue,
Keeping his crafty counsel in his breast :

"Yes, I have heard of Ithaca myself,
Even in Crete, afar across the sea :
Now I have hither come with these my goods, 330
And in my hasty flight I left behind
For my loved children wealth as vast as this :
I fled because I slew the cherished son
Of king Idomeneus, Orsilochus ;
The runner swift, who with his feet so fleet 335
Could conquer in the race all mortal men
Who eat the fruits of the broad land of Crete.

For he would fain have robbed me of my spoil,
All that I won at Troy; for which I bore
Anguish of soul, enduring strife with men, 340
And with the dreary waves; and this because
I had but little will to serve at Troy
Under his father's rule against the foe,
But led my band of followers myself.
I therefore with a comrade lay in wait 345
Hard by the way which he had gone afield,
And smote him with my spear on his return:
Dark night the heavens veiled; none saw us there,
No human being knew I took his life.
But when I thus had slain him with my spear, 350
I sought a ship of the Phæacians,
And bribed them with the spoil which I had won,
Entreating them to land me on the shore
Of Pylos, or of Elis the divine,
Which the Epeians hold beneath their rule. 355
But them a mighty tempest bore away
Far from their course, and sore against their will,
For they had no design to play me false:
Thence tossed about, we hither came by night;

And reached our haven tugging at the oar: 360
None thought of food, although we hungered sore,
Too glad were all to land and lay them down.
Me wearied out, sweet slumber overcame,
While they bore all my treasures from their ship,
And laid them down beside me on the sand. 365
Embarking then, for fair Sidonia
They steered; and left me here with all my woes."

Thus spake the chief. The blue-eyed goddess smiled,
Pallas herself, and soothed him with her hand;
And straight she took a beauteous woman's shape, 370
Of form majestic, skilled in works of art,
And thus addressed him with these winged words:

"Cunning and wily must he be indeed
Who thee would over-reach in artifice;
Aye if a god were in the lists against thee! 375
Bold, shift, steeped in craft; thou wilt not drop
E'en in thy native land thy artful speech,
And doublings, which are part of thine own self.
But talk no more of this; masters in craft
Are both of us; thou first of mortal men 380
In counsel and in words of wisdom art;

And I among the gods am most renowned
For forethought and resources: dost not know
Pallas Minerva, child of mighty Jove,
Who ever stands beside thee as thy guard 385
In all thy toils, who the Phæacians
To kindly feelings wrought in thy behoof?
Now I am here to plan a scheme with thee,
And hide the wealth which the Phæacians
Presented to thee on thy home return, 390
At my sole counsel and by my good will:
Also to tell thee all the trials sore
Which Fate reserves for thee in thy fair halls,
Which thou must bear with patience: nor reveal
To man or woman that thou hast returned 395
From thy long wanderings; but thou must submit
In silence to the outrage of these men."

Wary Ulysses answered in reply:

"Yea, goddess, hard it is for mortal man,
Chancing to meet thee, thee to recognise, 400
Though he may know thee well; for thou thyself
All shapes assumest: this I know right well,
That when we Grecian chiefs waged war at Troy

Aforetime, thou didst deign to favour me ;
But when we had o'erthrown the lofty walls 405
Of Priam's city, and we had embarked,
And when some god scattered the Grecian fleet,
Then did I fail to see thee child of Jove ;
Then never in my bark didst thou appear,
Nor didst afford me help in bitter need : 410
With sorely stricken heart I wandered still,
Until the gods gave me deliverance ;
Before thou words of comfort didst vouchsafe
In the rich land of the Phæacians ;
And to their city deignedst me to guide. 415
Now I entreat thee for thy father's sake
Tell me,—methinks I have not yet arrived
At my own sunny Ithaca, but strayed
To some strange shore ; and all that thou hast said,
It seems to me, is but a jest of thine, 420
To lead my scattered senses quite astray ;
Tell me, is this in sooth my native land ?”

The blue-eyed goddess thus to him replied :

“Yea, such a thought is ever in thy breast,
And therefore will I never thee desert 425

In all thy woe; for that thou ever art
Steadfast and wary, and of ready wit.
For any other man, on his return
After long absence, in his joy would rush
To see his wife and children in his home: 430
But no, thou hast no wish to make thee known,
Or question aught, until thou prove thy wife:
But ah! she sits within thy halls and spends
The weary nights and days in shedding tears.
I never doubted of thy fate, I knew 435
Thou wouldst return with all thy comrades lost;
But yet I had no wish to come to strife
With Neptune, who my father's brother is;
And who is vex'd in his soul with thee,
Since thou hast blinded his beloved son. 440
Now that thou mayst believe, I will point out
To thee thy very home, thy Ithaca.
Lo! this is Phorcys' haven, called from him
The ancient genius of the sea; there stands,
Waving its branches at the haven's head, 445
The leafy olive tree, and near to it
There is the cavern with its pleasant shade,

Home of the Nymphs, whom men call Naiades ;
This is the vaulted cave, where thou wast wont
So often to the Nymphs to sacrifice ; 450
And there Mount Neritus with forest clad."

Thus as she spoke the goddess drew aside
The mist ; he saw the country all around :
How then rejoiced the godlike, suffering chief !
Greeting his native land, he kissed the soil, 455
The foison-giver ; stretching forth his hands,
Straight to the Nymphs he thus addressed his
prayer :

" Daughters of Jove, ye Nymphs, ye Naiades,
I little thought to see ye here again !
And now I greet ye with all hallowed vows ; 460
And I will give ye gifts as I was wont,
If she the child of Jove, the Spoil-giver,
Will deign to grant me life, and will vouchsafe
That my dear son may live to be a man."

Then him the blue-eyed goddess thus addressed : 465

" Be bold, and nothing doubting in thy soul ;
But straightway all these treasures let us place
In the recesses of this ample cave,

That they be safe; and we will counsel take
How we may best accomplish all our ends." 470

The goddess spoke; into the darksome cave
She plunged, and its deep hiding-places searched.
Ulysses brought the gold, and solid bronze,
And all the garments wrought with cunning skill,
Which the Phæacians gave; all these he brought, 475
And these with care he laid within the cave;
And at its entrance Pallas set a rock
Herself, the child of ægis-bearing Jove;
And then beneath the sacred olive tree
The two together sat, and converse held 480
How they might ruin on the suitors bring;
And first the blue-eyed goddess thus began:

"Son of Laertes, fertile in resource,
Now to decide how thou mayst lay thy hands
On that unblushing crew, who three years long 485
Now lord it in thy halls, and offer gifts
To urge their suit, wooing thy godlike wife:
She pining in her soul for thy return,
Still hope extends, and flattering promises
To all, with other projects in her heart." 490

Subtle Ulysses answered in reply:

“Ah woe for me! it well had been my lot
To meet my doom within my palace halls,
As did the son of Atreus, but for thee,
Goddess, who timely warning gavest me: 495
Now let us counsel take for my revenge.
If thou wouldst only stand by me, and breathe
Stern courage in my soul, as thou wast wont
When we brought down Troy’s gleaming battlements;
If with thy shining eyes thou standest by me, 500
Great goddess, with thy willing countenance,
I would not fear to face three hundred men,
So thou wouldst only deign to be my guard.”

Then straight the Blue-eyed answered in reply:

“I will not fail thee, nor forget thee now, 505
In this our enterprise; and well I ween
That many of that horde who waste thy goods
Shall stain the broad earth with their blood and brains.
But I must thee disguise, that all men here
May fail to know thee: I will waste away 510
The goodly flesh upon thy supple limbs,
And wither on thy head thy dark brown hair;

Clothe thee in rags and tatters, which shall raise
Loathing in him who sees thee wearing them ;
Make dim thine eyes that were erstwhile so bright ; 515
So that to all the suitors thou appear
Wretched, as well as to thy wife and son.
Then first thou must thyself the swineherd seek,
Who guards thy swine, and loyal is to thee,
And loves thy son, and thy Penelope. 520
Him thou wilt find sitting among the swine,
Hard by the Raven's Stone, and by the rill
Of Arethusa ; where they acorns eat,
And drink pure water, fattening food for swine :
There do thou stay, and sitting by his side 525
Question him of thy home. Meanwhile, O chief,
I go to Sparta, home of women fair,
To fetch Telemachus, thy much-loved son :
To Lacedæmon with its stretching plains,
To visit Menelaus he has gone, 530
To ask for news of thee, and of thy fate."

Wary Ulysses answered in reply :

"But why didst thou not tell him this thyself?
Thou knewest all right well ; unless perchance

It was thy will that he should wander too 535

Over the waste of waters, suffering woes,
That others might eat up his house and home."

The blue-eyed goddess answered in reply :

"No need that thou be anxious for his sake.

I sent him there myself, that he might win 540

Renown abroad ; he suffers no distress,

But rests at ease in Menelaus' home,

And in his palace nothing does he lack.

'Tis true the princes who his mother woo,

And waste his substance, in their black-hulled ship

Now lie in wait for him on his return, 546

To slay him ere he reach his native soil ;

But well I ween they will not gain their end :

His native soil will cover some of them."

And as she spoke, the goddess with her wand 550

Touched him ; and at her touch she shrank away

The goodly flesh upon his stalwart limbs,

And withered on his head his dark brown hair,

His skin she covered with the skin of eld,

Faded his eyes that were erstwhile so bright, 555

And changed his tunic for a sorry robe,

Ragged and dirty, soiled with filthy smoke,
And wrapped him in a skin of the swift stag
With hair worn off; placed in his hands a staff,
Also a shabby wallet, tattered all, 560
Therewith a cord to hang it round his neck.
They parted then; the goddess took her way
To Lacedæmon and Ulysses' son.

BOOK XIV.

\ ARGUMENT.

Eumæus the Swineherd.

DAY 37.

AND he ascended by the rugged path
Which from the haven scaled the mountain
tops

To the thick glade, where Pallas bade him seek
The worthy swineherd; him the trustiest
Of all the bondsmen whom Ulysses owned. 5

He found him seated in his homestead porch
Where stood his lofty courtyard, far apart,
Built fair and spacious on a rising knoll.
The swineherd, while his master was away,
Himself had built it for the swine, unknown 10
To old Laertes and his mistress too,

With solid stones, and hedged it in around
With thorns; and all along outside he drove
A palisade of solid oaken stakes,
Closely together set: these he had trimmed, 15
Splitting away from them the dark-hued bark.

Within the homestead's bounds to house the swine
A dozen stalls he close together built;
And fifty grovelling swine in each were penned,
All dams for breeding; and the boars outside 20
In smaller numbers lay; their numbers thinned,
The noble suitors' banquets to supply:
To them the swineherd needs must ever send
The very best of all the fatted boars:
Three hundred and threescore were left of these. 25

Four dogs were ever on the watch at hand;
Savage and huge as beasts of prey were they:
The master man, the swineherd, them had bred;
And he sat fitting sandals for his feet,
And diligently trimmed a goodly hide. 30
Three of the herdsmen watched the feeding swine
Afield; the fourth at the proud suitors' 'hest
He with a boar had to the city sent,

That they might slay it for their banqueting,
And satisfy their appetite with flesh. 35

At once the baying hounds descried the chief,
And howling rushed on him; with dauntless craft
He sat him down, and cast his staff away:
But for the swineherd he had suffered then
At his own farmstead grievous injury; 40
Who dropped his hide, and through the doorway ran;
After the dogs with nimble feet he rushed,
And, shouting at them, pelted them away
With showers of stones; and thus addressed the King:

“The dogs were like to tear thee limb from limb, 45
Old man; and thus thou wouldst have brought on me
A sad reproach indeed, on whom the gods
Have heaped already other pains and grief:
For here I sit in sorrow and in woe,
Tending my godlike master’s fatted swine 50
For other men to eat; while he, alas!
In some far land or city wandering now,
Midst people of strange tongue, may want for food,
If yet he live and see the light of day.
But follow me, old man, that in my hut 55

Thou satisfy thy soul with food and wine,
And tell me who thou art, and what thy woes."

And as the worthy swineherd spoke these words,
He led him to his hut, and bade him sit;
Thick brushwood strewed for him, and laid thereon 60
Hide of the shaggy goat, ample and soft,
For him to rest upon. The chief rejoiced
That he received him thus, and spoke these words:

"Stranger, may Jove and all the other gods
Grant all thy wishes, for thy kind good will." 65

To him, Eumæus, didst thou answer thus:

"Stranger, 'tis not for me to scorn a guest,
Came he to me in sadder plight than thou:
To Jove belong the stranger and the poor,
Under his guard are they; all we can give 70
Is small indeed, though given willingly;

It is the lot of thralls to live in dread
When youthful princes such as mine bear rule.
Alas! the gods have held him from his home
Who would have cherished me with loving care, 75

And given me a home and household goods,
And comely wife as well, my own to be;

All that a kindly master could bestow
On him who labours hard in his behalf,
Whose labour god has prospered and increased ; 80
Even as mine, in which I still abide :
Therefore my master would have favoured me
Had he grown old at home ; but he, alas !
Has perished. Oh that Helen and her race
With knees upon the earth may perish all, 85
Since many a knee has kissed the earth for them !
In Agamemnon's cause my master went
To Troy, to fight the Trojan chivalry."

As thus he spoke, he bound with thrifty speed
His tunic with his girdle fast about him, 90
And to the sties he went, and brought from thence
Two sucking pigs ; and cut the throats of both,
Singed them, and cut them into portions small,
Pierced them with spits : when they were roasted well,
He brought the portions smoking on the spits, 95
And scattered over them white barley-meal,
And serving laid them all before the chief :
Next in a cup he mixed the luscious wine,
And, sitting opposite, urged him to eat :

“Now, stranger, eat, such food as serving men 100
Are wont to eat; the fatted boars and swine
Are for the suitors; men who in their souls
Have neither sense of pity nor regard:
The blessed gods love not such evil deeds,
But recompense good deeds and righteousness. 105
Corsairs and bandits, who o’er foreign lands
For plunder roam, when they have booty won,
And with spoil-laden ships steer for their home,
Yea, even on the souls of such as they
A mighty dread of future vengeance falls: 110
But these, who doubtless know, who from some god
Have doubtless heard the tale of his sad end,
Have neither will to carry out their wooing
With honest purpose, nor to seek their homes;
With haughty unconcern and recklessness, 115
Unsparingly they swallow up his goods.
Each day, each night, which Jove allows them life,
It is not merely victims one or two, I ween,
They slay and sacrifice for their carouse;
Swilling his wine besides with care-less waste. 120
“For boundless was my master’s livelihood:

Not one was rich as he, of all the chiefs
Of the mainland with its dark fertile soil,
Nor Ithaca itself; no twenty lords
Could with their havings make the sum of his. 125

“To reckon up the tale: on the mainland
Twelve herds of cattle, and twelve flocks of sheep,
As many herds of swine, and droves of goats
Ranging the hills; and some of them are watched
By strangers, some by herdsmen of our own: 130
And here upon the margin of the shore
Eleven scattered flocks of goats in all
Are browsing, guarded all by trusty men;
Who for the suitors each must daily bring
A kid, the best of all the fatted goats: 135
And I for my part watch and tend the swine,
And choose and send the finest boars to them.”

He spoke; the chief in silence ate and drank
Hungriily, brooding vengeance on his foes:
But when his lust for food was satisfied, 140
And he had dined, the swineherd filled the cup
From which he drank himself, and offered it,
Filled to the brim with wine, to him the chief;

And he received the cup with gladdened heart,
And thus addressed him with these winged words: 145

“Dear friend, who is this rich and mighty chief
Of whom thou talkest much, and who, it seems,
Bought thee with his own money for a slave?
Thou saidst he fell in Agamemnon’s cause;
Tell me,—perchance I may have met the man. 150
Jove knows, and all the other gods as well,
If I may give thee tidings of his fate,
For I have wandered over many lands.”

The trusty man, the swineherd, thus replied:

“Old man, no traveller coming hither now, 155
Who told the coming of the absent one,
Could win the faith of his dear wife and child;
For vagabonds, who home and shelter need,
Lie without scruple, care not for the truth.
Each vagrant who arrives in Ithaca 160
Comes with his idle stories to the Queen;
And she receives all comers, talks with all,
And in her grief for him sheds many tears,
As women wont, who for their husbands mourn.
And so couldst thou, old man, invent a tale 165

With readiness, to one who offered thee
Tunic and robe and garments for a gift.
But him, alas! the dogs and noisome birds,
So swift on wing, have doubtless long ere this
Torn from his bones the flesh; yes, he is dead, 170
Or him the fish have eaten; and his bones
Lie lapped in sand upon the lonely shore:
Ay, he has gone, and sorrow left behind
For all his friends; and most of all for me.
No, never shall I find, where'er I go, 175
So kind a master; not if I could see
My father's and my mother's house again
Where I was born, and those who nourished me.
Much as I long to see these yet once more
On my own native soil, I do not yearn 180
So much for them, as still I yearn for him;
I pine to see Ulysses yet again.
Stranger, I hardly dare upon my lips
To bring his name, and he not present here;
For from his soul he loved me tenderly: 185
I greet him far away, the Honoured one."
The suffering chief thus answered in reply:
"My friend, since thou refuseth to believe,

Nor wilt allow that he will e'er return,
And still thy soul persists in unbelief; 190
I will not only say, but I will swear,
Ulysses is at hand; and when he comes,
And stands again within his palace walls,
This shall a guerdon for my tidings be:
That thou shalt clothe me then in garments fair, 195
With robe and tunic; and ere he arrive,
None will I take from thee, though great my need.
Hateful to me as are the gates of Hell,
Is that poor wretch who, yielding to the sway
Of poverty, tells idle lying tales. 200
Bear witness, Jove, the chief of all the gods,
This hospitable table, and the hearth
Of great Ulysses which I now approach,
That these things are at hand which I declare:
Within the year Ulysses will be here; 205
As this moon waneth, ere the next appear,
He will be in his home, and vengeance take
On all who wrong his wife and noble son."
Then thus, Eumæus, didst thou answer him:
"Never of me wilt thou such guerdon win, 210

Old man, nor will Ulysses e'er return;
But drink thy wine in peace, and let us talk
Of other things, and think no more of this;
For sore it grieves my heart within my breast
Whene'er I call to mind my master dear. 215
Now pass we by thine oath, though none the less
May he return; I wish this from my heart,
As fervently as doth Penelope,
The old Laertes, and Telemachus,
His godlike son; for whom I now must grieve, 220
Nor consolation find: him whom the gods
Favoured and nourished as a blooming plant;
And from his form and as wondrous comeliness
I fondly thought that he would rival yet
Some day his mighty father: but, alas! 225
Either some god has led his mind astray,
Wont to be so composed, or else some man.
To sacred Pylos he has gone, to seek
If news there be touching his father's fate;
And now the princely suitors lie in wait 230
To slay him as he voyages to his home,
That the Arceisian race be rooted out,

And leave no name behind in Ithaca!

But talk no more of him, whate'er his lot,

Whether to perish or to 'scape; I pray 235

That Saturn's son may o'er him stretch his arm.

"Now, venerable man, wilt thou relate

Thy own misfortunes? Tell me now in truth,

That I may rightly know, whence comest thou?

What is thy state and kindred? In what ship 240

Hast thou arrived? How did thy sailors guide

Thee here to Ithaca? What race are they?

For well I know on foot thou cam'st not hither."

Wary Ulysses answered in reply:

"Thy questions I will answer truthfully: 245

But had we two provision made for us

Of food and fragrant wine, within this hut,

For long as we might need, so we could sit

And feast at ease while others did our work,

For a whole year I might be telling thee, 250

And yet not finish telling my heart's griefs;

All I have suffered by the gods' decree.

"In the broad lands of Crete I claim my home,

Son of a wealthy father; and to him

His wife and consort many other sons 255
In wedlock bore, who in his halls were bred.
My mother was a concubine and slave,
With money bought: but he whose son I am,
Castor the son of Hylax, treated me
With the like honour and regard with which 260
He honoured his own sons in wedlock born.
He, for his gifts of fortune and of wealth,
And for his family of gallant sons,
Was by the Cretans as a god revered:
But when the Fates bore him to Hades' realms, 265
His noble sons all his possessions shared,
And lots they cast; but scanty was the lot
Which with a dwelling they assigned to me.
But by my valour soon I won a wife,
Of wealthy parents born: not worthless then 270
Was I! no craven in the battlefield.
Now all my strength is gone, the stubble left
Alone to show the crop which flourished here:
Sore Misery now holds me in her grasp.
Minerva then, and Mars the god of war, 275
Valour and might resistless gave to me;

And when I planned attack upon the foe,
And for the ambush chose the bravest men,
My dauntless soul had never fear of death;
But springing forward, far in front of all, 280
I with my spear struck down the enemy
Who strove to 'scape me by his speed of foot.
Yea, such was I in war; but scant my care
For peaceful labour, or a life at home,
And all the joys of rearing children fair: 285
But ships urged swiftly onward by the oar
Were ever dear to me; the strife of war,
Arrows, and pointed spears with polished staves;
Dread things, which others shudder to behold;
But dear they were to me: a love for these 290
A god implanted in my mind; for men
In various kinds of work their pleasure find.
And I, before the Greeks set foot in Troy,
Nine times had sailed away in my swift ships,
Commanding warriors 'gainst a foreign foe: 295
And thus much booty had I gained; of which
I largely took as chief, besides the share
I won by lot: thus soon my house grew rich,

And I was feared and revered in Crete.
But when the counsels of all-seeing Jove 300
That fatal expedition had decreed,
Which brought so many heroes to their end
With limbs relaxed in death; the people willed
That the renowned Idomeneus and I
Should lead our ships to Troy; nor did we dare 305
Refuse, for threatening was the people's voice.
For nine years there we fought, we Grecian chiefs;
And on the tenth sacked Priam's citadel,
And in our ships embarked, and steered for home.
Then did a god scatter the Grecian fleet; 310
But Jove the Counsellor had other ills
In store for wretched me: only one month
Did I remain rejoicing in my home,
With my dear children and my youthful wife;
For then my restless will urged me to sail 315
For Egypt in my well-appointed fleet,
With my companions, rivals of the gods.
Nine ships I fitted; they were quickly manned;
Then for six days my much-loved comrades held
A feast; and many victims I supplied, 320

To make a solemn offering to the gods,
Also for them their banquets to prepare;
And on the seventh day we went on board,
And sailed away from the broad lands of Crete
Before a northern wind, so fresh and fair, 325
Swiftly as if a current bore us on.
No ship of mine her tackle strained at all;
And we on board, all hale and hearty, sat,
The while the helmsmen and the steady breeze
Kept the ships straight upon their onward course. 330
On the fifth day at the fair flowing flood
Of Egypt we arrived; and in the stream
I moored my galleys swinging to the oar.
I ordered then my comrades to remain
Close by the galleys, and to guard them there; 335
And scouts I forward sent to view the land.
But giving way to over-recklessness,
And trusting to their might, they sacked and spoiled
The goodly lands of the Egyptians;
Their wives and children took, and slew their men.
The clamour of the fray the city reached; 341
And when they there the shouts for succour heard,

They came in numbers as the dawn appeared.
The plain was filled with warriors and steeds,
And gleaming bronze: then Jove the Thunderer 345
A fatal panic on my comrades cast;
None dared to stand his ground before the foe,
And ruin hemmed us in on every side.
And there the foe slew many of my men
With sword and lance; and some they took alive, 350
Saved but to drudge for them in slavery.
But Jove himself a scheme put in my thoughts;
Would I had died instead, and met my fate
In Egypt!—grief was yet to be my host:
I quickly tore my helmet from my brow, 355
And from my shoulders threw my trusty shield,
And from my hand I cast away my lance,
And rushed before the chariot of the king,
And clasped him by the knees and kissed his feet.
He rescued me and saved me; made me sit 360
Beside him in his chariot; to his home
He took me with him, weeping as I went,
While many with their lances thrust at me,
Eager to slay me: they were mad with wrath;

But he preserved my life, in awe of Jove, 365

The strangers' guard, who aye repays ill deeds.

Seven years I there remained, and wealth I gained

From the Egyptians, which they freely gave.

When the eighth year approaching now drew nigh,

A man arrived there, a Phœnician; 370

A crafty villain, skilled in every wile;

Who many ills had wrought on many men.

This man beguiled me; and we both agreed

To voyage together to Phœnicia,

Where he abode, and all his riches were. 375

For a whole year I sojourned there with him:

But as the months and days were all fulfilled

Of the revolving year, and seasons waned,

He shipped me off in a swift-sailing bark

To Libya, and a lying pretext gave 380

That I should help him in his merchandise;

Intending there to sell me as a slave,

From which he hoped great profit to obtain.

I followed him perforce on board his ship,

Suspecting, though I could not help myself. 385

Before the northern breeze, so fresh and fair,

O'er the mid sea the bark ran swiftly on,
Till Crete we sighted; then it was that Jove
Their ruin willed: for when we left the isle,
And when the land behind us disappeared, 390
And nought remained in sight but sea and sky,
Then Saturn's son raised up a lurid cloud
Which hung above our hollow bark; below
The deep grew dark with its portentous shade.
Then Jove let loose his thunder: with his bolt 395
He smote our bark, which reeled beneath the stroke
Of Jove's dread levin brand; with sulphurous fume
She reeked; the crew all overboard were hurled;
Like sea-birds floating on the heaving waves,
They swam about the black hull of the ship: 400
The god from them snatch'd hope of home return.
But Jove of me was mindful in my woe;
Himself vouchsafed to place within my grasp
The mighty mast of the dark beak'd ship,
To save me from destruction; to the spar 405
I clinging held, and drifted up and down
Before the furious blasts of stormy winds.
For nine days long I drifted; on the tenth,

In pitch-dark night, the mighty rolling wave
Hurled me on shore on the Thesprotian strand. 410
There Pheido gave me hospitality,
The hero king of the Thesprotians,
With no reward or guerdon; for his son
Found me o'ercome with cold and weariness,
And with his hands he raised me from the ground 415
And led me to his home, his father's halls,
And tunic, robe, and garments gave to me.

"'Twas there I heard about Ulysses' fate,
For Pheido told me he had entertained him,
As he was on his way towards his home. 420
The treasures which the chief had brought with him
He also showed me; iron wrought with skill,
And bronze, and gold; enough was lying there
Ten generations after to enrich;
Such was the wealth in the king's palace stored. 425
The chief, he said, had to Dodona gone,
That from its lofty-crested oak divine
He might the counsel learn of mighty Jove;
If he who had been absent now so long,
Should to his much-loved native land return 430

Without concealment, or arrive by stealth.
And as he poured libations in his home,
He swore to me myself, that even then
The ship was launched, and ready was the crew,
To send him to his cherished native land. 435
But me he sent away the first: by hap
A ship of the Thesprotians was bound
To make a straight course to Dulichium;
And thither, to that land, the rich in corn,
He bade them me conduct with every care, 440
To king Acastus; but an ill intent
Against me did they harbour in their minds,
That I might reach a further bourn of woe.
Soon as the gliding ship had left the land,
A day of slavery and misery 445
The crew for me prepared: first off they stripped
My robe, my tunic, and my garments fair;
And then these filthy rags they cast about me,
And this foul tunic which thou now beholdest.
As evening fell, they reached the well-tilled fields 450
Of sunny Ithaca; on board their ship
They left me bound, fast with a twisted rope,

And went on shore in haste ; and on the beach
By the sea-side they took their evening meal.
But me the gods themselves released from bonds 455
With ease : I shrouded in my rags my head
And by the polished rudder clambered down,
And laid my breast in silence on the flood ;
Then, paddling with my hands, I swam away ;
And soon was I on shore, afar from them. 460
Thence I crept up beneath a thick-leaved copse,
And lay me crouching down ; with outcry wild
They rushed about to find me ; but it seemed
They thought it well to make no further search,
And soon they went again on board their ship ; 465
And me the gods themselves concealed from them :
And they vouchsafed to lead me to the home
Of a true-hearted and a righteous man ;
For longer yet it is my fate to live.”
Then thus, Eumæus, didst thou answer him : 470
“Unlucky stranger, thou hast pity moved
Deeply within my soul by the sad tale
Of all thy sufferings and thy wanderings :
But as to what thou say'st about the chief,

I cannot think thee right; nor wilt thou win 475
My confidence: why dost thou lie for nought?
The chances of my king's returning home
I know right well myself; hated indeed
Was he by all the gods right bitterly,
In that he fell not by the Trojan foe 480
Midst friendly arms; the game of war outplayed:
Then all the Greeks had raised to him a tomb,
And to his son had fallen a glorious name.
But him the Harpies now have swept away
Ingloriously: and I remain afar 485
Among my swine; nor to the city go,
Except perchance the wise Penelope
May send for me on some report of news.
Meanwhile the people of the city there
Sit round and question every idle tale; 490
Both those who grieve for the long absent chief,
And those who joy that they without constraint,
Or cost to them, can waste his livelihood.
But on this subject I have little lust
To ask or speak, since an Ætolian 495
So utterly deceived me with his tale:

He, having slain a man, came to my roof
A fugitive; and I received him well.
He told me he had seen the chief in Crete,
With king Idomeneus; refitting there 500
His galleys, sorely shattered by the storms.
He said he would be here without a doubt,
By summer or by autumn; and would bring
Much spoil with him, his gallant comrades too.
And now some god has sent thee here to me, 505
Wretched old man; but do not thou attempt
To flatter or to comfort me with lies:
These will not win my favour or regard,
But rather that I stand in awe of Jove,
The guard of strangers; and I pity thee." 510
Wary Ulysses answered in reply:
"A right mistrustful soul thy bosom hides!
And such thou art, that even by my oath
I have not won thee to believe my words.
Now let us make a covenant; the gods 515
Who in Olympus dwell, our witnesses:
If, as I say, thy master shall return
To Ithaca, his home, thou shalt agree

With tunic, robe, and garments me to clothe,
And to Dulichium shalt send me on, 520
Whither I fain would go: but otherwise,
If he return not as I have foretold,
Command the thralls to hurl me from the rock,
That any other needy wanderer
May wary be of telling lying tales." 525

The worthy swineherd answered in reply:

"Nay, stranger, praise nor credit should I win
Now or henceforth among my fellow-men,
If, after I had brought thee to my cot
And treated thee with hospitality, 530
I slew thee there, and robbed thee of dear life:
Of much avail would then be all my prayers,
Addressed to Jove, son of the Ancient One!
But now 'tis supper-time; right speedily
May my companions now return within, 535
That here in this our hut we may prepare
A cheerful meal, for all of us to share."

As thus with one another they conversed,
The swine, and herdsmen tending them, drew nigh.
The swine were penned within their stalls for night, 540

And mighty was the din as they were stalled;
And then the swineherd to his comrades cried:

“Bring out the best of all the boars to me,
That I may slay him to regale our guest,
Who from afar has come; and we ourselves 545
Will feast as well; in guerdon for the pains
And hardships we endure so constantly
About our charge, the swine, with gleaming tusks,
For others, who, with neither cost nor care,
The fruit devour of all our toil and moil.” 550

Thus having spoken, with the trenchant axe
He cleft the wood; and they dragged in a boar,
A fat five yearling; to the hearth they brought him.
Nor did the swineherd then neglect the gods,
By nature ever righteous were his thoughts: 555
And he began by casting in the flame
Hairs from the head of the white-tusked boar,
As he addressed his prayer to all the gods,
That the great chief should to his home return:
Then, rising up, he seized a log of wood 560
Which he had dropped when cleft, and smote the boar:
Life left the victim; then they cut his throat,

And singed the carcase and divided it.
The swineherd next upon the rich fat placed
Raw slices, which they cut from all the limbs; 565
He consecrating cast these in the flame,
When he had sprinkled them with barley-meal:
And all the rest he cut in portions small,
Pierced them with spits and roasted carefully,
And served them all, and placed them on the board. 570
The swineherd carved, well skilled in such a task,
And all divided into portions seven:
The one he laid aside with many prayers
First for the Nymphs, and Hermes—Maia's son;
And all the rest he shared among the men. 575
The chief he honoured with a portion cut
In slices from the back; and this respect
And honour done to him rejoiced the King;
And thus the wise Ulysses him addressed:
“Eumæus, mayst thou be as well beloved 580
By Father Jove, as now by me thou art;
Since in my woe thou thus hast honoured me.”
And thus, Eumæus, didst thou answer him:
“Eat thou, unhappy one; what god provides

Enjoy; for he will give and take away 585
E'en as he will: he is omnipotent."

And then the firstlings he had laid aside
He offered to the ever-living gods;
And, pouring out libations of red wine,
He placed the beaker in Ulysses' hands, 590
Who cities and their strongholds had o'erthrown,
And he before his portion took his seat.
Mesaulius then handed bread to them,
The thrall, whom while his master was away
The swineherd purchased for himself, unknown 595
Both to his mistress and the aged chief,
Laertes, from the trading Taphians;
With money of his own he purchased him.
They on the viands laid their ready hands;
And when the lust for food and drink was o'er, 600
Mesaulius removed the bread from them,
And they, with bread and viands satisfied,
All straightway for repose prepared themselves.

Night fell; a rough and moonless night it was,
And all the night Jove sent a heavy rain; 605
And howled the western blast, with showers laden.

Ulysses then addressed them all ; he sought
To put the swineherd's kindness to the test,
To see if he would strip his mantle off
To shelter him the chief, or else would bid 610
Some one of his companions so to do,
As he had shown such care on his behalf:
 "Hear me, Eumæus, and his comrades all:
A wish I must express in words to you,
For wine which fools us all compels my words ; 615
Wine, which has oft induced the wise, the staid,
To sing and idly laugh, and e'en to dance ;
And much to say which better were unsaid.
But as I now have broken forth in speech,
I will not hide what I am fain to say : 620
Would I were young again, that is my wish !
Would that my strength were as unabated now
As at that time when I was one of those
Who led and planned an ambush 'neath the walls
Of Troy ! Ulysses joined in the command, 625
And also Menelaus, Atreus' son ;
And the third chief was I, for so they willed.
And when we reached the city's lofty wall,

In the thick brushwood, and among the reeds,
Which in a marsh were growing, there we hid, 630
And lay down under arms: came on the night,
Rough, with a bitter northern blast, ice-cold;
And on us fell the snow like freezing rime,
And hung in crystals round about our shields.
Now all the rest their tunics had and cloaks, 635
And wrapped in them they slept in quiet warmth,
And covered up their shoulders with their shields:
But I, in heedlessness, when I set out
With my companions, left my cloak behind.
I little thought 'twould be so bitter cold; 640
So when I went with them, I only took
My shield with me, and gleaming girded frock.
When the third watch was come, and when the
stars
Were sliding down, Ulysses I addressed,
And with my elbow, as he near me lay, 645
I pushed him, and he heard me readily:
“‘Son of Laertes, fertile in resource,
Not long have I to live; the biting cold
Is killing me: no cloak have I, alas!

My evil genius made me come away 650

In tunic only; now is no escape.'

"I spoke, and quick as thought he had a scheme;

Ever prepared for counsel or for fight;

And in a low-toned voice he said to me:

"'Be silent, lest some other hear thy words.' 655

"And on his elbow then he raised his head,

And, speaking louder, thus addressed them all:

"'List, comrades, in my sleep a dream divine
Has come to me; far are we from the ships:

One of you go, this message bear for me 660

To Agamemnon, shepherd of the folk;

That from the ships he reinforcement send.'

"Thoas, Andræmon's son, at once arose,

And, casting off his purple cloak, he ran

With speed towards the ships: straight in his cloak 665

I laid me down right glad; then broke the dawn.

"Would I were young and strong as then of yore!

For then, mayhap, one of these herdsmen here

Would with a cloak provide me, or from love

Or from respect towards a gallant man: 670

But now they scorn me in my sorry garb!"

Then, O Eumæus, thus didst thou reply :

“ Old man, right noble is thy tale of him ;

Naught vain or naught ill-mannered hast thou said :

Thou shalt not clothing lack, or aught beside 675

Which it is right that we should give to thee ;

Thou who hast found us here in thy distress ;

Now at this present : but at dawn of day

Thou must thy rags again about thee swathe.

We have not many change of raiment here, 680

Tunics or cloaks ; but one for every man.

But when Ulysses' much-loved son arrives,

He will himself give all these things to thee,

Tunic and cloak and garments ; and, besides,

Will send thee wheresoe'er thou wish to go.” 685

And as he said these words, he rose and placed

Close by the fire a couch, and on it cast

Skins of the goat and sheep. The chief lay down,

And over him the swineherd cast a cloak,

Ample and warm, which ever ready lay ; 690

A garment spare at hand to cover him,

Whene'er the fearful wintry blast should blow.

So thus Ulysses rested in repose,

And by his side the youths close by him slept.
But to the swineherd even then the couch 695
Had no attraction; nor would he lay down
To take his rest afar from all his swine:
He made him ready straight to issue forth.
The chief rejoiced to see his watchful care
For all his master's goods, and he afar. 700
And first he threw his keen-edged sword across
His stalwart shoulders, and his cloak he donned,
Both thick and warm, to keep him from the wind;
And over it a fleecy skin he cast,
Hide of a well-grown and well-nurtured goat; 705
Took too his pointed javelin, sure defence
From dogs and hostile men; and forth he went
To seek repose beneath the hollow rock,
Where the sharp-toothed boars had made their lair,
Well under shelter from the northern blast. 710

BOOK XV.

ARGUMENT.

Telemachus leaves Lacedæmon—His parting from Menelaus and Helen—Receives Theoclymenus on board his galley at Pylos—Arrives at the coast of Ithaca—Goes to the swineherd's hut.

DAYS 38-40.

MEANWHILE Minerva went upon her way
To Lacedæmon with its wide-spread meads;
To counsel and to urge the noble son
Of the undaunted chief to seek his home.
Telemachus, and Nestor's son, she found 5
Reposing in the palace corridor
Of famous Menelaus: in the bonds
Of gentle sleep lay Nestor's son fast bound:
But on Telemachus her soothing spell
She had not cast: cares for his father's sake 10

Kept him awake through the ambrosial night.

The Blue-eyed, standing near, addressed him thus :

“Telemachus, it is not well for thee

To wander any longer from thy home,

The goods within thy halls abandoning 15

To those disdainful men ; who will not fail

Amongst them to devour all that thou hast.

So thou a bootless errand wilt have gone ;

But Menelaus do thou urge at once,

Him of the cheering war-cry in the fight, 20

To send thee home ; if yet within thy home

Thou wish thy gentle mother yet to find.

Her father and her brothers urge on her

Eurymachus' proposals to accept,

And now to marry ; for he far outvies 25

The other princely suitors with his gifts,

And richer marriage presents offers yet :

So from thy palace she, despite thy will,

None of thy treasures may bear off with her.

Dost thou not know right well a woman's mood ? 30

How ever she contrives to benefit

Her new lord's home ? She never calls to mind

The husband of her youth when he is dead,
Nor all her former children ; on her lips
She cares no more to bring their names again. 35
Therefore do thou return to thine own home,
And give the care of all thy house contains
To the most trusty of thy serving-maids,
Until the gods vouchsafe to manifest
To thee a consort worthy of thy couch. 40
I tell thee this besides, and let my words
Sink deeply in thy soul : of that vile horde
The bravest keep a careful watch for thee ;
They lie in ambush in the narrow strait
'Twixt Ithaca and Samé, steep with crags, 45
To slay thee ere thou reach thy native soil.
But all in vain, I trow ; thy native soil
Will be the grave of many of these men,
The suitors : who devour thy house and home.
But in thy galley trim do thou steer clear 50
Of all the isles which lay upon thy course,
And still sail on by night as well as day.
Fear not, for one of the immortal gods
Who holds thee in his guidance and his charge

Will send a favouring gale in thy ship's wake. 55

But when thou shalt arrive at Ithaca,

At the first point thou touchest, there dispatch

Thy bark with all thy comrades to the port ;

But land thyself, and first the swineherd seek,

Who guards thy swine with care, and loves thee
well : 60

There rest at night ; him to the city send

To bear the news to chaste Penelope,

Of thy return from Pylos safe and sound."

As thus the goddess spake, she took her way

To far Olympus : he from slumber soft 65

Aroused the son of Nestor ; with his foot

He touched him, and addressed him with these words :

" Arise, O Nestor's son, Pisistratus,

Bring the sure-footed horses out at once,

And yoke them to the car that we depart." 70

Then Nestor's son, Pisistratus, replied :

" Telemachus, though eager to set out,

We cannot onward drive through darksome night.

It shortly will be dawn ; await till then :

When Menelaus, hero of the spear, 75

Will load thy chariot with many gifts,
And take his leave of thee with kindly words :
For ever will the guest recall to mind
With grateful memory in future years,
The host who loving-kindness shows to him." 80

He spoke, and gold-enthronèd Dawn appeared ;
And Menelaus of the battle-cry,
So good to rally in the fight, arose,
Leaving his couch by the fair Helen's side :
And him, as he drew near, Ulysses' son 85
Descried ; his tunic bright he quickly donned,
And o'er his stalwart shoulders cast his robe ;
Then at the door stood young Telemachus,
And with these words he thus addressed the chief :

"O Menelaus, leader of the folk, 90
I pray thee now to send me back again
To my own native land, so dear to me :
For now my soul is yearning for my home."

And Menelaus thus to him replied :
"Telemachus, I will not keep thee here 95
If thou art set on going ; the host I blame
Whose over-hospitality becomes

A burthen to his friend, or who neglects him.
'Tis ever best that reason be our guide :
He is at fault who shuffles off a guest 100
Who fain would stay, fully as much as he
Who keeps the guest who longs to get away ;
Feast him who stays, but let him go who will.
But yet remain awhile, that I may load
Thy chariot with fair gifts to glad thine eyes ; 105
And that I tell the women to prepare
A meal for thee from all our plenteous store.
'Tis equally an honour to the host,
And joyous and refreshing to his guests,
That they should eat and drink ere they depart 110
On a far journey to a distant land :
But if thou wish to turn thy steps to Greece,
Or midland Argos, I will go with thee
Myself, and yoke my horses to my car ;
And to the cities I will be thy guide. 115
None will refuse us hospitality,
And something as a present each will give ;
Either a brazen tripod, or a vase,
A pair of mules, or golden drinking cup."

Telemachus thus answered in reply : 120

“ O son of Atreus, leader of the folk,
I fain would to our home ; for there behind
None did I leave to guard my household goods :
I fear while seeking for my godlike father
I may be lost myself ; or else may lose 125
Some goodly treasure in my halls at home.”

When Menelaus of the battle-cry,
So good the fight to rally, heard these words,
He straightway told his wife and serving-maids
A banquet to prepare within the halls, 130
From all their bounteous store : and from his couch
Sprang Eteoneus ; he, Boëthus’ son,
Not distant from his master aye abode ;
He came to him his orders to receive ;
Who ordered him a fire to kindle straight, 135
And flesh to roast ; nor did he disobey.
Down to the treasure chamber, where the air
With scent was laden, Menelaus went ;
Nor went alone, for Helen followed him,
And Megapenthes. When they reached the store 140
Wherein his treasures lay, then Atreus’ son

A double chalice took ; to Megapenth
He gave in charge a silver bowl to bear :
And Helen by her wardrobe coffers stood,
Wherein lay garments rich with 'broidery ; 145
Garments which she had wrought with her own hand.
And Helen, lovely lady, took of these
The largest and most beautifully wrought ;
Star-like it shone, and lay beneath the rest :
Then through the palace back they took their way, 150
Until they came where stood Telemachus,
And brown-haired Menelaus him addressed :
 "Telemachus, may Juno's mighty Lord
Who wields the thunder, Jove himself, vouchsafe
Thy home return, on which thy mind is set ; 155
And of the treasures lying in my house,
The richest and the rarest shall be thine :
A bowl wrought with consummate workmanship,
Of silver pure, with gold worked round the brim,
A masterpiece of Vulcan's. Phædimus, 160
The warrior-king of the Sidonians,
Gave it me, when within his palace walls
He sheltered me, as I was voyaging home.

This as a gift I will on thee bestow."

Thus having said, the hero, Atreus' son, 165
The double chalice placed within his hands;
And stalwart Megapenthes brought to him,
And laid before him there the silver bowl;
And Helen with fair rosy cheeks stood near,
Holding the garment in her gentle hands; 170
And thus she spoke to him with tender words:

"Dear boy, this gift I give to thee myself,
As a memorial of Helen's hands.
Thy bride shall wear it in that happy hour
Which brings thy marriage: and until that hour, 175
Preserve it in thy palace, in the care
Of thy beloved mother. Mayst thou reach
Thy well-built home, and thy own native land
In safety; so wilt thou bring joy to me."

Thus having said, she placed it in his hands. 180
He gratefully received it: all the gifts
Pisistratus, the chief, received, and placed
Within the wicker basket of the car,
And viewed them all with wonder and delight.
The brown-haired Menelaus led the way 185

Towards the hall; and there they all sat down
On couches and on chairs in order due.
Meanwhile to wash their hands a serving-maid
From a rich golden ewer water poured
Into a silver basin, and laid out 190
The polished board; the modest stewardess
Served bread and choice of viands from her store
Right willingly; the while Boëthus' son
The viands carved, and portions gave to all;
And Menelaus' son poured out the wine. 195
They on the dainties laid their ready hands.
When they with meat and drink were satisfied,
Telemachus and Nestor's noble son
The horses yoked, mounted the painted car,
Through the fore gateway and the sounding porch 200
They drove them forth; and them accompanied
Brown Menelaus, and in his right hand
The wine he held in a rich golden cup,
That they might pour libations as they went.
Before the horses, there in front he stood, 205
And as he greeted them addressed them thus:
"Farewell, dear youths, and bear my greeting ye

To Nestor, shepherd of the folk, who ever
As kindly as a father was to me,
When we the Grecian chiefs waged war at Troy." 210

The prudent youth, Telemachus, replied :

"And willingly the message will we bear
Which thou hast given to us, O noble chief:

But oh, on my return to Ithaca,
That I may find Ulysses in my home ; 215

That I may tell him how I come from thee,

And all the loving-kindness I have found,

Besides the many treasures rich and rare!"

Thus, as he spoke to him, on his right hand

An eagle flew ; and in his talons seized 220

And from the courtyard bore a huge white goose,

A tame one : men and women after him

Rushed shouting ; and the bird drew near to them,

And on the right before the horses swooped.

Then all who saw rejoiced with gladdened hearts ; 225

And thus Pisistratus took up the word :

"Great Menelaus, leader of the folk,

Oh ! say, does god vouchsafe to manifest

This miracle for us, or for thyself?"

He spoke: the warrior pondered in his mind 230
How he the women rightly should explain;
When Helen of the sweeping garments spoke,
And, interrupting him, she thus exclaimed:

“Oh list! I will take up the prophecy,
As in my soul the gods their thoughts inspire, 235
And they will be accomplished well, I ween:
As this wild eagle from the mountain side,
Where he was hatched and bred, came swooping down,
And seized the goose, nurtured within this house;
Thus will Ulysses from his many woes, 240
And many wanderings in the wild, return
With vengeance to his home: yea, even now
Is he at home; and for the suitors all
He even now a mischief there prepares.”

Telemachus, the prudent youth, replied: 245
“May Jove vouchsafe to grant that so it be,
The Lord of Juno who the thunder wields;
And then in Ithaca, afar away,
To thee as to a goddess will I pray.”

They touched the horses with the whip; with
speed 250

They through the city swept and o'er the plain

With fiery mettle; through the livelong day

Their harness rattled on them as they went:

Then set the sun, the streets in shadow lay,

As they arrived at Pheræ; where abode

255

Diocles, of Ortilochus the son,

Who from Alpheius sprang; they rested there,

And he received them kindly as his guests.

And when the rosy-fingered Dawn appeared,

Born of the early morn, they yoked the steeds,

260

Mounted the painted chariot, and drove out

Through the fore gateway and the sounding porch;

He whipped them forward, and with willing speed

They onward flew; and speedily they came

To where the lofty keep of Pylos stands.

265

Telemachus then spoke to Nestor's son:

“Pisistratus, canst thou not promise me

And do as I desire? Friends we must be,

Both from our fathers' kindly fellowship,

And that we fellows are in time of life;

270

And now this journey which we make together

Will knit a closer bond of love for us:

Take me not past my galley, noble prince,
But leave me here ; lest the old man thy father
May in his eager hospitality 275
Detain me in thy house against my will :
For need there is that I should start at once."

Thus spake he, and the son of Nestor thought
How best he might accomplish his desire ;
And this to him in doubt appeared the best : 280
He drove the horses and the chariot
To the swift galley laying by the shore :
And lifted then on board, and stowed away
In the ship's after-hold, the splendid gifts,
Garments and gold, which Menelaus gave ; 285
And then he urged him with these winged words :

"Thou and thy comrades now embark in haste,
Before I reach my home, and ere I tell
The aged chief ; for right well do I know
His hasty will ; he will not let thee go ; 290
And he himself will hither come to fetch thee,
Nor will he back again return without thee :
Great will his anger be that thou art gone."

Then, as he spoke, he drove the silk-maned steeds

Back to the city of the Pylians, 295

And soon he reached his home. Telemachus

These urgent orders to his comrades gave :

“On board, my comrades; ready make the gear
For sailing in our black-hulled ship at once.”

Thus spake he, and they heard him and obeyed; 300
On board they went, and sat upon the thwarts.

And as he urged them to their tasks and prayed,
And to Minerva offered sacrifice

By the ship's stern; just then drew near to him

One who had come from far; now in his flight 305

From Argos, outlawed, having slain a man;

A seer he was, sprung from Melampus' race,

Who dwelt of yore in Pylos, rich in flocks.

A wealthy man among the Pylians,

In a right gorgeous palace there abode 310

Melampus; but he went to foreign climes,

Fleeing from Neleus and his native land;

The haughty Neleus, who of living men

The proudest was, and who by violence

His many treasures kept for a full year; 315

While he lay in the halls of Phylacus

Fast bound in painful gyves, in bitter woe :
And this because of Pero, Neleus' child,
And the blind folly which upon his soul
The goddess, the most dread Erinnys, cast. 320
But he escaped, and drove the lowing kine
From Phylacé to Pylos, and revenge
He took on Neleus for his lawless deed ;
And to his palace for his brother brought
The wife he won for him : to other lands 325
He went ; to Argos, pasture-land of steeds :
There 'twas his fate to dwell, and there to rule
The Argives ; and he wedded there a wife,
And built his palace with its lofty roof ;
And there Antiphates and Mantius, 330
Two stalwart sons, he got ; Antiphates
Begot Oïcles of undaunted soul :
Amphiarāūs, guardian of the folk,
Was born to him ; who was so much beloved
By Jove the ægis-bearer, and Apollo, 335
With every loving kindness ; ne'ertheless
He never reached the threshold of old age,—
At Thebes he perished by a woman's guile.

To him, before he perished thus, were born
Two sons, Alcæon and Amphilocho; 340
And Polyphides, Cleitus, both were born
To Mantius; but golden-throned Dawn
Took Cleitus for his beauty to herself,
That he might ever with the Immortals dwell.
And when Amphiaræus died, the god, 345
Even Apollo, Polyphides made
To be the chiefest seer for mortal men:
And he to Hyperèsia took his way,
Vexed with his father; there he made his home.
And there he prophesied to all mankind. 350

And Theoclymenus it was, his son,
Who came and stood before Telemachus;
Him found the seer as he libations made,
And prayed beside the swift and black-hulled ship,
And him he thus addressed with winged words: 355

“Since on this spot I find thee now, O friend,
Amidst the smoke of offerings; thee, I pray,
By these thy offerings, and by the god,
And by the life and safety of thyself,
And of thy comrades all, who follow thee; 360

Tell me who ask the truth, nor aught conceal;
Whence art thou, who thy kindred, what thy state?"

Telemachus, the prudent youth, replied:

"Thy questions I will answer truthfully,
O stranger. I was born in Ithaca; 365

My father is Ulysses; was, alas!

For he has perished by some dismal fate.

And therefore, sailing in my black-hulled ship,

With my companions am I here; I come

To seek for news of my long-absent father." 370

The godlike Theoclymenus replied:

"And I have also left my native soil.

I slew a man, a kinsman of my own,

And many of his kith and kin there are,

Who dwell in Argos, pasture-land of steeds; 375

And mighty is their sway among the Greeks:

I fly from these to 'scape from death and doom.

My fate is now to wander amongst men;

Take me on board thy ship; to thee I pray,

A fugitive; oh! leave me not to die: 380

I know they now are hard upon my track."

Telemachus, the prudent youth, replied:

“Surely I will not thrust thee from my ship,
But come on board if such be now thy will;
At home be welcome to the cheer we have.” 385

He spoke and took from him his brazen lance,
And laid it on the swinging galley’s deck :
Telemachus himself then went on board
His floating bark; and at the stern he sat,
And Theoclymenus beside him placed. 390

The stern-fasts off they cast; Telemachus
Then urged his crew the tackle to prepare,
And readily his order they obeyed:
The pine-wood mast they raised, and firmly placed
Within its step, and steadied it with shrouds; 395

And with the haulyards made of twisted hide
They hoisted the white sails; a following gale
The blue-eyed goddess sent to favour them;
Which blustered fiercely through the cloudless sky,
To urge the galley o’er the salt-sea flood; 400

And running swiftly, Crunos she passed by,
And also Chalcis with its limpid rills;
Then set the sun, the streets in shadow lay;
And speeding onward with the gale from Jove,

Pheæ she reached, and Elis the divine, 405

Which the Epeians hold beneath their sway.

On steered the youthful chief amidst the isles

With needle cliffs, debating in his mind

Whether he should escape, or meet his fate.

Meanwhile Ulysses and the swineherd supped 410

Within the hut, and with them supped the men:

When they with meat and drink were satisfied,

Ulysses then addressed them all; to prove

The swineherd, and to try if he could still

Persuade him to remain within his hut, 415

And still would entertain him kindly there,

Or to the city let him take his way:

“Hear me, Eumæus, and his comrades all.

By dawn I fain would to the city go

To beg my way, that I no longer be 420

A burthen to thy comrades and to thee:

But give me now good counsel, and a guide,

To point me out the way, and when once there

I by myself will wander up and down,

As needs I must, and through the city beg, 425

If some one will afford me meat and drink:

And at the palace of the godlike chief
I would my news tell to Penelope:
And fain would meet the goodly company
Of the proud suitors, who perhaps may give me 430
Somewhat to eat of all their dainty food;
Besides, I can right deftly minister
To all their wants. Now list and mark my words:
By the good will of Hermes, the great Guide,
Who grants his favour and his tutelage 435
On such like duties amidst all mankind,
No other mortal man can vie with me
In servile offices; right skilled am I
To pile the fire with wood, to cleave the logs,
To carve, to cook, and eke to serve the wine; 440
Such acts as menials for their lords perform."

In anger thou, Eumæus, didst reply:

"Alack! what put such purpose in thy brain,
Unhappy stranger? Dost thou long for ill,
That thou wouldst join that haughty company, 445
Those men whose violence and arrogance
O'ertops the very iron heaven itself?
Not such as thou must be their ministers;

But youths they are in gallant raiment clad,
Of goodly mien, and beauteous countenance, 450
Who do their 'hests: well polished is their board,
Groaning beneath the viands, bread, and wine.
But do thou stay with us; thy presence here
Cannot in any wise a burthen be,
To me, or these who my companions are: 455
And when Ulysses' much-loved son arrives,
He will himself give all thou mayst desire,
Tunic and robe and garments; and, besides,
Will send thee wheresoe'er thou wish to go."

To him the much-enduring chief replied: 460
"Eumæus, mayst thou be as much beloved
By Father Jove, as now by me thou art;
Who to my wanderings a rest hath given,
And to my direful misery relief.
No ill is greater than this homeless life. 465
What woful pangs men suffer from the pinch
Of cursed hunger,—they on whom has fallen
The fate to wander aye midst pain and grief!
But as thou wilt not let me go, and here
Thou bidst me wait the coming of the prince, 470

About Ulysses' mother tell me now,
And of the father of the godlike chief,
Whom on the threshold of old age he left
As he departed; are they still alive
Under the sun's bright beams? or are they dead, 475
And to the realms of Hades have they gone?"

The swineherd, chief of men, to him replied:

"I will a truthful answer give to thee:
Laertes is alive, but aye he prays
Within his halls to Jove, that he vouchsafe 480
To quench the life and motion of his limbs:
Sadly he grieves for his long-absent son;
And for his wife, companion of his youth,
So virtuous; her death has grieved him sore,
And brought him to a premature old age: 485
She died of grief for her renown'd son,
A lamentable death! May such a fate
Ne'er fall on any near and dear to me!
Right glad was I to ask and to inquire
Concerning her while yet she was alive, 490
Although her life was sorrowful indeed:
For when a child she brought me up herself

With her own lovely daughter Ctimené,
Whose garments sweep the ground, her youngest born.
Together we grew up ; she honoured me 495
With little less regard than her own child :
But when we both grew up to blooming youth,
To Samé she was given ; and they received
A thousand treasures for her bridal gift.
Her mother goodly garments gave to me, 500
Tunic and robe and sandals for my feet,
And sent me here afield : she loved me well :
And now, alas ! I miss her kindly care.
Yet all my toil in which I labour still,
The blessèd gods have prospered in my hands ; 505
And of its fruits, I earn my meat and drink,
And aye to the deserving too can give.
From her who is my mistress now, I hear
Naught pleasant said or done, since these proud men
Have brought upon our house this misery : 510
The very slaves speak loudly scornful things
Before their mistress, and hear idle tales,
And eat and drink and rob all they can get,
As slaves will ever have a mind to do."

Ulysses, wise in counsel, thus replied : 515

“Alas! Eumæus, when thou wast a child,
Thou must have wandered far from thine own land,
And all thy kindred; tell me now in truth,
Thy native city with its spacious streets,
In which thy father and thy mother dwelt, 520
Was it destroyed and sacked by hostile men?
Or thee did pirates find when left alone,
Tending thy flocks of sheep and herds of kine;
And did they bear thee off on board their ship
To sell thee, to the palace of thy lord, 525
Who gave to them a goodly price for thee?”

Then spoke the master-man, the swineherd, thus:

“O stranger, since thou askest, I reply.
In silence sit and listen to my tale
In peace, and drink thy wine: the nights are long, 530
And time there is for sleep, and time for those
To hearken to a tale who care to hear;
Nor is there need that thou go to thy couch
Before the time; irksome is over-sleep:
And of the others, let him go and rest 535
Whose mind and will is so disposed; at dawn,

When he has broken fast, he needs must forth,
And seek the pastures with his master's swine.
We twain will eat and drink within the hut,
And feel a pleasure as we call to mind 540
Each other's griefs: for when our pains are past,
A man may find a pleasure e'en in them,
Who much has suffered and has wandered far;
So I will tell thee all thou askest me.

“There is an island, as thou mayst have heard, 545
Syria its name, above Ortygia,
And there the sun its wheeling changes makes;
Not over-peopled, but a goodly land
For cattle and for sheep, and corn and wine;
No dearth approaches its inhabitants, 550
No baleful sickness, which so oft afflicts
Unhappy mortals: when its citizens
Grow old, Apollo of the silver bow,
And Artemis, together visit them,
And slay them with their gentle painless shafts. 555
Two cities are there in the isle; for them
Divided into twain is all the land;
Over these cities twain my father reigned,

Named Ctesius the son of Ormenus ;

A peer of the immortal gods was he. 560

“ And some Phœnician sailors hither came,
Deceiving villains, in their black-hulled ship.
Thousands of trashy ornaments they brought :

A woman of Phœnicia in his house

My father had, a fair and comely dame, 565

And skilled to work in fine embroidery ;
And these Phœnician tricksters her beguiled.

When she was washing clothes beside their ship,

As she was wont, one of them met her oft,

And gained her love, as women's minds are fooled 570

So often, be they e'er so virtuous :

He asked her who she was, and whence she came ;

She told him where her father's mansion was :

‘ I claim to be of Sidon, rich in bronze,

Daughter of Arybas, a wealthy man ; 575

As from the meads I wandered to my home,

The Taphian corsairs stole me, brought me here,

And sold me to my master for a price ! ’

“ And he who gained her love by stealth replied :

‘ Wouldst thou not willingly go home with us, 580

And see thy father and thy mother's house
Once more? Alive they are, and passing rich.'

"And thus the woman answered in reply :

'Would that might be! but first thy crew must swear
That they will take me safely to my home.' 585

"Thus spake she, and the sailors took the oath:
And when they all had sworn as she required,
The woman thus addressed them with these words:

'Now keep your counsel; and let none of you
His comrades, when they meet me in the street, 590

Or at the fountain, speak a word to me;

Lest some one from my aged master's house

May hear the tale, and his suspicion rouse;

So that he bind me fast in durance vile,

And ruin bring on you. So curb your tongues, 595

And haste the bargain for your merchandise:

But when the cargo is on board your ship,

A message send to me without delay;

Gold will I bring, and all that comes to hand;

And I will willingly another price 600

Pay for my fare; within my master's hall,

I tend his little son, a knowing boy,

Who out of doors is ever at my heels ;
Him will I bring on board the ship with me,
And he will fetch a heavy sum for you, 605
When ye have borne him off to foreign lands.'

"She spake, and to our mansion fair returned :
For a whole year they sojourned still with us,
And many goods they purchased trafficking,
Wherewith to store the hold of their stout ship : 610
And when the ship was laden for her voyage,

A messenger they sent to tell my nurse.
A crafty rogue came to my master's house ;
A golden necklace, strung with amber beads,
He brought with him ; my mother and her maids 615
Looked at it in the hall with longing eyes,

Passed it from hand to hand, and bid for it :
And he in silence nodded to my nurse,
And, having warned her thus, he went his way
Straight to the roomy ship ; then me she took, 620
And led me through the doorway by the hand.

In the fore court she found the tables laid
With goblets ready for the banqueters,
Who on my father in attendance were ;

And they for an assembly had gone forth, 625
A council of the people. Quick as thought,
Three of the cups she in her bosom hid,
And carried off; I thoughtless followed her;
Sun set, and shadow fell on all the streets,
And soon we to the echoing haven came, 630
Where the swift ship of the Phœnicians lay:
They made us come on board, embarked themselves,
And o'er the paths of the great deep made sail.
Jove sent a favouring gale: six days and nights
We still sailed onward; but when Saturn's son 635
The seventh brought, the archer Artemis
The woman smote; down the ship's hold she fell,
As drops the diving sea-gull in the wave.
They cast her overboard to be the prey
Of seals and fishes; I was left to weep, 640
While wind and wave bore them to Ithaca,
And there Laertes bought me with a price:
And thus my eyes first looked upon this land."
Noble Ulysses answered in reply:
"Eumæus, thou hast deeply stirred my soul, 645
Recounting all the woes thy soul has borne;

But Jove, with all this ill, hath sent thee good,
Since thou through suffering hast reached the home
Of a kind master, who has given to thee
Thy meat and drink with every thoughtful care: 650
A happy life is thine; but as for me,
Through many cities of the human race
Still wandering, I reach this shore at last."

As thus with one another they conversed,
They laid them down to rest, but not for long, 655
For soon the Dawn shone from her golden throne.

Meanwhile the comrades of Telemachus
Drew near the land; at once they furled the sails,
And struck the galley's mast; and with the oars
They rowed her to a haven; anchored her, 660
And her secured with stern-fasts to the shore;
And on the beach they landed, and prepared
Their morning meal, and mixed the ruddy wine.
When they with meat and drink were satisfied,
The wise Telemachus took up the word: 665

"Do ye now row the galley to the port,
While I my lands and herdsmen visit first;
At eve I from the uplands will come down

And seek the city, and my business there ;
And by the following dawn will pay to you 670
The reckoning for our journey ; a rich feast
Of viands choice, and luscious-tasting wine."

Him godlike Theoclymenus addressed :

" Whither am I to go, dear youth ? Whose roof
Will shelter me of all the island chiefs ? 675
Shall I thy mother and thy palace seek ?"

Telemachus, the prudent youth, replied :

" I gladly under other circumstances
Thy presence at our palace would invite,
Where is no lack of cheer for friendly guests ; 680
But now it might be irksome to thyself,
Because I must be absent from my home ;
Nor will my mother see thee. In our house
Rarely among the suitors is she seen,
But in her upper room the distaff plies ; 685
But I will tell thee of another chief
Who will receive thee well : Eurymachus,
The noble son of warlike Polybus ;
Whom as a god the men of Ithaca
Regard ; the noblest is he of them all ; 690

And of them all does he desire the most
To wed my mother, and to have and hold
Ulysses' kingly rule: but as to this,
Olympian Jove, the dweller of the skies,
He only knows whether he fore-ordain 695
Their day of doom before their marriage-day."

As he was speaking, flew on his right hand
A hawk, Apollo's swift-winged messenger:
He seized and tore to pieces with his claws
A dove, and shred his feathers to the earth, 700
Between the galley and Telemachus:
And Theoclymenus called him aside
From his companions, clasped him by the hand,
And thus addressed his friendly speech to him:

"'Tis not without the purpose of the gods, 705
Dear youth, this bird upon thy right has flown:
For well I knew he must an omen be
Soon as I saw him fly; and he portends
That never any other race but thine
Will bear the kingly sway in Ithaca; 710
But o'er its people ye will ever rule."

Telemachus, the prudent youth, replied:

“O stranger, may thy speech accomplished be !
Soon shouldst thou know my love and gratitude,
And he who saw thee would account thee blest.” 715

Then to Piræus, his tried friend, he said :

“O son of Clytius, of all my friends
Who followed me to Pylos, ever first
And readiest art thou to heed my words ;
Wilt thou now take this stranger to thy home, 720
And entertain him until I arrive ?”

Piræus, skilful with the lance, replied :

“Telemachus, however long a time
Thou here remain, of this be thou assured,
With honour will I entertain thy guest ; 725
He shall not want for aught that guests require.”

Thus as he spoke he went on board the ship,
And ordered his companions to embark,
And to cast off the stern-fasts from the shore :
They went on board, and sat upon the thwarts. 730

Telemachus then bound about his feet
His graceful sandals ; from the galley's deck
He took his trusty lance with brazen head :
Then they at once the hawsers cleared away,

Shoved off the galley from the shore, and steered 735

Towards the city; thus commanded them

Telemachus, Ulysses' cherished son.

And him his feet bore swiftly on his road,

Until he reached the homestead, where the swine

In thousands grazed; and where with them abode 740

The trusty swineherd, who his masters loved.

BOOK XVI.

ARGUMENT.

Telemachus sends Eumæus to the city—By Minerva's counsel
Ulysses discovers himself to his son.

DAY 40.

ULYSSES and the swineherd at the dawn
Had now a fire kindled in the hut,
Prepared their morning meal, and sent afield
The under-herdsmen with the grazing swine.
Telemachus approached; the watchful hounds 5
Uttered no threatening bark as he drew near,
But whimpered welcome round him; and the chief
Observed the friendly motions of the dogs,
And heard the echo of approaching feet;
And to Eumæus spoke these wingèd words: 10
“Eumæus, list! I hear the sound of feet,

For Pylos in thy ship : come in, dear boy,
That I may glad my heart to see thee here,
But even now returned from far away : 35
Few are thy visits to our pasture-lands
Amidst the wild ; thou rather seek'st the town,
And seem'st to take a pleasure to frequent
Thy mother's suitors' hateful company."

The prudent youth thus answered in reply : 40
"So be it, father, for in truth I came
To see thee, and to gather news from thee,
If yet my mother dwells within our halls ;
Or has one of the princes wedded her ?
And is Ulysses' bed left desolate, 45
With dismal cobwebs for its garniture?"

The swineherd, chief of men, to him replied :
"Ay, verily, with ever-constant heart
Still dwells she in thy halls ; and the sad nights
And days drag on their length for her in tears." 50

He spake, and took from him his brazen lance,
And he across the stony threshold trod,
And went within the hut ; as he drew near,
Ulysses rose to yield his seat to him ;

But then Telemachus his father stayed 55

With kindly gesture, and addressed him thus :

“Be seated, stranger ; we can find a seat

Elsewhere within our homestead readily ;

Which he who follows will provide for us.”

He spoke, and as he entered sat him down, 60

The swineherd having strewed a seat for him

With heathers green, and o’er them spread a fleece ;

And there sat down Ulysses’ much-loved son.

Meanwhile the swineherd served upon the board

Trenchers of viands ready cooked for them, 65

Which from their former evening meal they left ;

And bread he piled in baskets for their need,

And in the flagon mixed the luscious wine,

And then before Ulysses took his seat :

They on the viands laid their ready hands. 70

When they with meat and drink were satisfied,

Telemachus the swineherd thus addressed :

“Now, father, tell me who this stranger is ;

How did the sailors guide him here to us,

And of what race are they ? for well I know 75

That not on foot came he to Ithaca.”

Then thus, Eumæus, didst thou answer him :

“ Dear youth, all this I will to thee relate :

He claims to come from the broad lands of Crete,
And many cities has he wandered o’er 80
Of men, he says, in his long pilgrimage ;
For this the fate the god to him decreed.
But now escaped from a Thesprotian ship,
He came beneath my roof: him I present
To thee ; do with him as thee seemeth good : 85
A suppliant, he thy protection claims.”

Telemachus, the prudent youth, replied :

“ Eumæus, verily my soul is vexed
To hear this speech of thine ; how in my home
Can I protect this stranger ? I a youth 90
Who never yet made trial of my strength
To guard me from the foe by force of arms ?
And now my mother is of doubtful mind
Whether she will remain at home with me,
And guide her household, holding in respect 95
Her husband’s honour and the people’s voice ;
Or whether she will follow to his home
The bravest and the richest of the chiefs,

Who pay their court to her within my halls.

But since this stranger now has sought thy home, 100

A cloak and tunic I will give to him,

And garments fair, and sandals for his feet,

And a two-edgèd sword; and I will send him

Where'er he hath the mind and wish to go:

So if thou wilt, let him remain with thee, 105

And take thou care of him beneath thy roof;

And garments I will hither send for him,

And food for him to eat; lest he become

A burthen to thy comrades and to thee.

But I have no desire that he should seek 110

The suitors, who are full of cruel pride;

Lest they ill-treat him, which would grieve me sore.

However strong and brave a man may be,

'Tis hard for one a number to withstand,

For numbers still will win the upper hand." 115

Ulysses, the enduring chief, then spoke:

"Dear youth, it surely is permitted me

Something to say in answer to thy speech:

My soul is torn to hear what thou hast said,

Of all the lawless deeds which that vile horde, 120

Thy mother's suitors, plot within thy halls;
Against thy will, and noble as thou art.
But tell me now, dost thou put up with this
Of thy free will? or it may haply be
That thine own folk are hostile to thy cause, 125
Obedient to some oracle divine?
Or are the brothers of thy blood to blame,
To whom a man should trust for sure defence
Against the foe, if bitter strife arise?
Would I were young as thou! Could I but be 130
In the same mood as now! or would I were
Ulysses' son, or else Ulysses' self,
The noble chief, returning to his home
From wandering, as hope there is he may!
Then rather would I that the foeman's sword 135
Should share my head away, so that on these,
On all of these, I might my vengeance wreak,
Within the palace of Laertes' son:
Yea! though I must alone to numbers yield,
Far rather would I die, slain in my halls, 140
Than look with patience on these hateful deeds;
The stranger and the guest contemned and scorned,

The women dragged about the palace fair
 In hideous fashion; all this wine-swilling,
 This banqueting which never has an end, 145
 With aimless purpose, and with no result."

Telemachus, the prudent youth, replied:

"Thy questions I will answer truthfully.

The people are not hostile to my cause;
 Nor can I blame the brethren of my blood, 150
 To whom a man should trust for sure defence
 Against the foe, if bitter strife arise:

For Saturn's son has destined that our race
 Should ever in a single line descend.

Arceisius begat an only son, 155

Laertes; who begat an only son,

Ulysses; and he left me in his halls

An only child; nor had he joy of me.

Now in my home my foes in thousands swarm;

For all the princes of these islands here, 160

Who in Dulichium and Samé rule,

And in Zacynthus with its wooded heights,

And all the chiefs of craggy Ithaca,

Are suitors to my mother; and consume

My house and home: she neither can refuse 165

Their hateful offers, nor accept their suit.

Meanwhile they waste and ruin me and mine:

On the gods' will the issue rests of this.

“But now, my father, go without delay

And tell Penelope that I am here, 170

And that from Pylos I have safe returned.

Meanwhile I here remain; do thou come back

When thou hast told the news to her alone:

Tell not the Grecian princes I am here;

For many are they who plot ill for me.” 175

And thus, Eumæus, didst thou answer him:

“I hear and mark; thou speak'st to one who heeds;

But further tell me now in truth, and say,

By the same road shall I Laertes seek?

The poor old man, in spite of all the grief 180

Which for his son Ulysses still he felt,

Was wont to watch the labour in the fields;

And in his home, when he had appetite,

Amidst the slaves and servants ate and drank:

But now, since thou departedst in thy ship 185

For Pylos, he, they say, nor eats nor drinks,

Nor cares to see the tillage of the lands;
With tears and sighs of sorrow there he sits;
His flesh is wasted from his bones with grief."

Telemachus, the prudent youth, replied: 190

"How much the sadder this! but let him be,
However we may grieve on his account:

But if a choice were left in mortal's power,
The very first of all things we would choose
Would be my father's home return, not mine. 195

But when thou hast my mother told, come back;
Nor wander through the fields in search of him:
But speak thou to my mother that she send
Her maid, the stewardess, at once by stealth;
And she can tell the aged chief the news." 200

At this the swineherd rose, and in his hands
He took his sandals, bound them on his feet,
And to the city hasted: as he went,
Minerva did not fail his going to mark;
And as he left, the farmstead she drew nigh, 205
And in a beauteous woman's shape appeared,
Of form majestic, skilled in works of art.
Thus to Ulysses she appeared, and stood

Before the doorway of the lowly hut :
Telemachus, though full in front of her, 210
Observed her not, his senses were enchained ;
For not to all will gods their presence show.
Ulysses saw her ; saw her too the hounds ;
They barked not, but in terror whining fled
Cowering across the court ; with her dread brows 215
She nodded at him ; and he marked her 'hest,
And through the dwelling went the godlike chief,
And passed beyond the lofty courtyard wall,
And stood before the goddess, who thus spoke :
"Son of Laertes, fertile in resource, 220
Now it is time that thou shouldst tell thy son,
Nor hide from him, how when ye have prepared
For that vile horde of suitors death and doom,
Ye both must to your famous city wend :
And I, who long to join you in the strife, 225
Be sure will not be far from you myself."

Then Pallas smote him with her golden rod,
And cast about his breast the goodly robe
And tunic which he erstwhile wore ; restored,
And grander made his form, and manhood's bloom ; 230

Gave back to him the rich dark hue of health;
Filled up again the hollows of his cheeks;
Curled round his chin his dark and flowing beard.

When she had wrought this change, she went her way:
And straight Ulysses passed within the hut, 235
And his beloved son was wonder-struck,
And turned aside his eyes away from him

In fear, lest he might be some deity;
And thus addressed him with these winged words: 239

“Changed art thou, stranger, now from what thou wast,
Thy garments changed, and changed thy countenance.

Oh, thou must be some god who dwells in heaven:

Be merciful, and I will give to thee

Offerings, and gifts wrought cunningly in gold,

✓ To win thy grace; so thou thy servants spare!” 245

The suffering chief thus answered in reply:

“No god am I, in sooth; why dost thou deem
That I resemble the immortal gods?

I am thy father; for whose sake so long

Thou in thy grief hast suffered many woes, 250

And borne the contumely of hostile men.”

He spake and kissed his son; and o'er his cheeks

A tear coursed to the ground, restrained so long :

But yet Telemachus could not believe

That this could be his father standing there ; 255

And quickly thus he answered in reply :-

“Oh, thou art not Ulysses, nor canst be

My father ; but some god who witches me,

So that I yet may grieve, and yet may sigh :

No mortal man, by his own mortal power, 260

Could do such miracles ; unless a god

Should visit him, and by his own free will

Should lightly make him young and make him old :

Aged, ill clad, wast thou a while ago,

But now art like a dweller of the skies.” 265

The wise Ulysses answered in reply :

“Telemachus, it ill beseems thee now

To gaze upon thy father in his home

With boundless wonder and amazement strange :

For no Ulysses will come back to thee 270

Save this one whom thou seest : I am he

Who suffered woes in my long pilgrimage,

And in the twentieth year reach home again.

This is Minerva's work, the spoil-giver ;

She in her mighty working, as she wills, 275
Doth so dispose of me ; now I appear
A poor old man, and at another time
I seem a youth in comely garments clad :
'Tis easy for the gods who dwell above
In the broad heavens, to raise a mortal man 280
To honour, and to humble him again."

He spake and sat him down. Telemachus
Threw himself on his noble father's breast,
And tears of joy he shed ; and o'er them swept
The storm of grief, right bitterly both wept : 285
More vehement the accents of their grief
Than those of birds of prey, eagles and hawks,
Of mighty beak and claw ; whom of their young,
Ere they were fledged, the rustic swains have robbed.
Thus tears of pity from their eyebrows fell : 290
The setting sun had found them weeping still,
Had not the youth his father thus addressed :

"Belov'd father, tell me in what bark
Thy sailors brought thee here to Ithaca ?
What country do they claim ? for well I know 295
That thou on foot couldst not have reached these shores."

The godlike chief thus answered in reply :

“Dear boy, all this I will to thee explain :

Those famous sailors the Phæacians

It was who brought me here ; who pilots are, 300

And guides to all mankind who reach their shores :

And as I slept on board their galley swift,

They bore me o’er the main, and landed me

In Ithaca : and many splendid gifts

They gave to me besides, of bronze and gold, 305

In plenteous store, and garments richly wove ;

And these are hidden in a rocky cave,

By the gods’ prompting and at Pallas’ ’hest.

Thither I come that I may counsel take

With thee how we may slay our enemies ; 310

But tell me of the suitors’ numbers first,

How many, and what sort of men they be :

And then I will consider and decide

Whether we two alone can face the band,

Or whether we must others call to aid.” 315

Telemachus, the prudent youth, replied :

“Father, thy mighty fame I aye have heard,

That thou in arms art skilled, in counsel sage ;

But great the emprise thou proposest now!
Amazement seizes me; 'twere hard indeed 320
For two to face so many, and they brave.
Not merely ten, or twice ten do they number,
This band of suitors; many more are they.
Now I will tell their numbers o'er to thee:
First two-and-fifty from Dulichium, 325
All chosen youths, six henchmen follow them;
From Samé four-and-twenty gallant chiefs;
Next from Zacynthus twenty Grecian youths;
Twelve princes, noble all, from Ithaca;
Medon the herald and the bard divine 330
Attend on them, with two skilled servitors.
If we should face all these within our halls,
Bitter and sad for us, and not for them,
Might be thy coming to revenge thy wrongs.
But say if any champion there be 335
Who of his own free will may stand by us."

And thus the dauntless chief to him replied:

"Yes, I will tell thee; do thou mark my words
And graft them in thy soul, and think them o'er:
Will Pallas us suffice with Father Jove, 340

Or need we other champions than these?"

Telemachus, the prudent youth, replied :

"Good are the champions thou namest now ;
Though sitting in the clouds afar on high,
They rule mankind and the immortal gods." 345

The godlike chief thus answered in reply :

"Not long aloof will they remain from us,
Nor from the sound of the fierce shout of strife,
When 'twixt us and the suitors in my halls
The stern debate of Mars to issue comes." 350

But with the early dawn do thou go home,
And join the haughty suitors' company.

Me afterwards the swineherd will conduct
Into the city, in a beggar's guise ;
Wretched and old shall I again appear : 355

And if with scorn they treat me in my home,
Still let thy faithful heart within thy breast
My shameful handling bear ; if by the heels
They drag me through the hall and out of doors,
And missiles hurl at me, constrain thyself 360

To witness even this with patience,
And urge them to refrain from their mad acts

With gentle words: but all which thou mayest say

They will not heed, because their doom is nigh.

And thus I tell thee, fix it in thy soul, 365

When the great goddess, the wise counsellor,

Shall prompt me, I will nod my head to thee;

And understand that thou must then remove

The warlike weapons lying in the hall,

And to a closet in the upper room 370

Carry them all; and with deceiving words

Beguile the suitors, if by any chance

They miss the arms, and question thee thereon:

‘Out of the smoke have I removed the arms,

For now no longer do they look the same 375

As when Ulysses left them here behind,

And he set out for Troy; but sorely marred;

The vapour from the fire has dulled their sheen:

And for another reason of more weight

The son of Saturn prompted me to this; 380

For fear of strife among you in your wine,

Lest ye should wound each other; and thereby

Bring shame upon your wooing and your feast:

For iron of itself draws men thereto.’

“And for ourselves alone leave thou two swords, 385
Two spears, and bucklers twain of tough bull hide,
At hand, that we may seize them readily ;
And Pallas and great Jove the Counsellor
Themselves will witch the suitors by thy words.

And this I say, and fix it in thy soul ; 390
As thou art mine, and of my very blood,

/ Let no one hear Ulysses has returned :
Let not Laertes nor the swineherd know ;
No servant ; not Penelope herself :

So thou and I alone may prove ourselves 395
What is the conduct of the handmaidens ;
And we will prove the serving-men as well,
Who hold us in respect and reverence,
And who of them regard us not at all ;
And, noble as thou art, set thee at naught.” 400

And thus his glorious son to him replied :
“O father, thou shalt know my soul, I ween,
From this time henceforth, that no wavering thoughts
Within me dwell : but this device, I think,
Will be of little gain to both of us : 405
And thee I urge this to consider well,

How long thou wilt be watching ere thou know
The conduct of each servant. These meanwhile,
The suitors, at their ease within thy halls,
Devour thy living without let or stint. 410
But yet I would advise thee to find out
The conduct of the women; and decide
Who are the shameless, who the innocent.
As to the men who in our homesteads work,
I do not think that we need prove them now, 415
But this may be a later care for us;
If so it be that thou dost rightly read
The omens, sent from Jove the ægis-bearer."

As thus with one another they conversed,
The gallant bark the city now drew near, 420
Which had from Pylos brought Telemachus,
And all his comrades; to the haven deep
They steered their course, and beached the black-
hulled ship:

The ready servants lifted out for them
The gear and weapons; and to Clytius' house 425
They straightway bore the gifts magnificent.
Then to the palace of the chief they sent

A herald, who should tell Penelope
How that Telemachus had now returned,
And to his lands had gone, and ordered them 430
To bring the galley to the city port ;
Lest the fair Queen should in her fear for him
Be anxious, and let fall the pearl-like tear.
And so the herald and the swineherd met,
Bearing the self-same message to the Queen : 435
And when they reached the palace of the King,
The herald midst her handmaids her addressed :
“ O Queen, thy son from Pylos has returned.”

The swineherd then approached Penelope,
And told her all which her beloved son 440
Had ordered him to tell ; his task fulfilled,
He left the court and palace ; and in haste
He turned his steps towards his charge, the swine.

The suitors were dismayed and vexed at heart ;
And from the palace halls they issued forth, 445
And went beyond the courtyard's massive wall,
And there they took their seats outside the gates,
When first Eurymachus addressed them thus :
“ O friends, with a high hand Telemachus

Has carried out his plans, has made his voyage ; 450
And this we little thought that he could do :
Now let us launch a ship, the best we have,
And put a crew on board, skilled oarsmen all,
To tell our comrades to return to us."

He hardly ended, when Amphinomus, 455
Turning his glance away from land to sea,
Within the basin of the harbour saw
The galley, as they lowered the sails on board
And stretched out to the oars; he softly laughed,
And with these words his comrades he addressed: 460

"No need to send for them, for here they are!
Mayhap some god has warned them; or themselves
Have seen his galley passing on her way,
And could not overtake her in the chase."

He spake, they rose and went towards the shore, 465
And then at once they beached the black-hulled ship;
The ready servants disembarked the gear,
And they to hold a council went together;
And none did they allow to sit with them,
Or share their counsels, whether young or old. 470
Antinous, Eupéithes' son, thus spoke:

“Lo! how the gods have snatched this man from
ill!

Each day we sat upon the breezy cliff
And watched in turn; and when the sun went down,
During the night we never stayed on shore, 475
But in our galley swift we put to sea;
And there lay to, until the dawn of day;
Watching in ambush for Telemachus,
To catch him: but some god has brought him home.
Now let us plan how we may ruin bring 480
Here on Telemachus, with no escape.
For well I ween, while he remains alive,
We never shall accomplish our designs;
For he is fraught with wisdom and resource,
Nor do the people greatly favour us: 485
So let us act before he can collect
The Greeks in council; for right sure am I
He will not lose his chance, but in his wrath
He will bestir himself, and tell to all
How we have planned to slay him, and have
failed; 490
And they, be sure, will not approve our acts.

Beware lest they some ill on us inflict,
And drive us from our land to banishment.
So let us catch him ere he is aware,
Far from the city, in the country lands, 495
Or on his homeward road; and then divide
Amongst us all his riches and his goods,
And to his mother give his house and home,
Or to the chief who wins her for his spouse.
But if ye do not favour this design, 500
But rather counsel that we let him live,
And still enjoy his father's heritage;
Then let us not henceforth, assembled here,
Devour-in wholesale guise his rich domain:
Rather let each from his own palace woo, 505
And strive to win the lady with his gifts;
And afterwards the chief shall marry her,
Who gives the most, and is the favoured one."

He spoke, and they were silent, speechless all,
Until Amphinomus took up the word, 510
The gallant son of Nisus, who was sprung
From king Aretias: he was the chief
Of all the princes of Dulichium,

Who from that land of plenteous corn and grass
Had come to woo the Queen; his kindly words 515
Were ever pleasing to Penelope,
By nature turned his mind to gentleness.
He in his wisdom spoke, and them addressed:

“O friends, it would be sore against my will
To slay the prince; it is a fearful thing 520
To raise a hand against a royal race.
First let us seek for counsel from the gods;
And if the oracle of mighty Jove
Approve, myself will slay Telemachus;
And I myself will back your enterprise: 525
But if the gods forbid it, stay your hands.”

Thus spoke Amphinomus; and they approved,
And rising up they sought Ulysses' house,
And on the polished chairs they took their seats.

Then a new thought had chaste Penelope; 530
Before the haughty suitors to appear:
For she had heard how they, in her own halls,
Had laid their plans to murder her own son;
Medon had told her, who their counsels heard.
She went, attended by her handmaidens, 535

Towards the hall; as soon as she approached
The suitors, at the threshold of the hall,
Built with consummate workmanship, there paused
The lovely lady, and before her cheeks
Let down the gauze-like veil; and thus addressed 540
With these upbraiding words Antinous:

“Thou arrogant contriver of all ill,
Antinous: they say in Ithaca
Thou dost outshine in wit and eloquence
Thy compeers; worthless art thou, ne’ertheless. 545
Madman! to dare to plot the death and doom
Of my Telemachus: hast no regard
For suppliants in misery, whom Jove
Protects?—unhallowed aye is treachery.
Dost thou not know thy father hither came 550
A suppliant, a fugitive, in dread
Of the deep vengeance of the people here,
Because he sided with the Taphians,
Those robbers of the sea; and evil wrought
On the Thesprotians, who our allies were? 555
Therefore they wished to rob him of dear life,
To slay him, and his bounteous goods to spoil.

It was Ulysses who prevented them ;
'Twas he restrained them, thirsting for revenge :
And now his house and home thou dost devour 560
With neither cost nor stint : dost woo his wife,
Wouldst slay his son, and deeply grievest me !
I charge thee to desist, and stay the rest."

To her Eurymachus in answer spoke :

" Icarus' daughter, chaste Penelope, 565
Have courage, nor be anxious about this :
There is no man, nor ever will there be,
He is not born, that man who dares to lay
His hands on thy Telemachus, thy son,
While I yet live and see the light of day. 570
And now I tell thee what will surely be ;
Right soon about our spear shall his red blood
Spout forth : for he who cities overthrew,
Ulysses, oft has held me on his knees ;
Fed me with viands choice and ruby wine : 575
Therefore Telemachus is dear to me
Far above other men : and now I tell thee,
Fear not his death by us the suitors' hands ;
What from the gods may come, no one may shun."

Thus spoke he to encourage her, but lied; 580
For he it was himself who planned his death.

She to her upper chamber beautiful
Ascending, her Ulysses there bewailed,
Her husband so beloved: until sweet sleep
The blue-eyed goddess on her eyelids cast. 585

At even to Ulysses and his son
Came back the worthy swineherd; busy they
Prepared their evening meal, and sacrificed
A yearling swine. Minerva drawing near
Smote with her golden wand Laertes' son, 590
And made him old again, and o'er his form
She cast again his miserable rags;
For fear the swineherd him should recognise,
And he, unable to restrain his joy,
Should tell the news to chaste Penelope. 595
And first Telemachus addressed him thus:

"Thou hast come back, Eumæus: say, what news
Thou bringest from the city? Have returned
The noble suitors from their ambushment,
Or are they keeping still a watch for me?" 600

And thus, Eumæus, didst thou answer him:

“I had no mind to question or converse
As I passed through the city: my chief care
Was to perform thy ’hest, and here return.
But from thy comrades a swift messenger, 605
A herald, met me; he it was who first
Thy mother told, and thus forestalled my task.
But this I-know, and saw it with my eyes:
As o’er the city, and by Hermes Mount,
I went in haste, I saw a galley swift 610
Making our harbour; many men on board
She had, and full she seemed of shields and arms;
Bristling with pointed lances, double shod.
I thought that these were they; but know I not.”

He spoke: the youth, rejoicing in his might, 615
Smiled, as he cast a furtive glance aside
Towards his father, shunning the swineherd’s eyes.

And when they had the viands ready made,
They rested from their toils, and took their meal;
And naught was lacking for their appetite. 620
When they were satisfied with food and drink,
They sought their couches mindful of repose,
And all enjoyed the blissful gift of sleep.

BOOK XVII.

ARGUMENT.

Telemachus goes to the city and his mother—Ulysses follows,
led by Eumæus—Arrives at his palace in the guise of an
aged beggar—Is recognised by his dying hound, Argus.

DAY 41.

AND when the rosy-fingered Dawn appeared,

Telemachus, Ulysses' cherished son,

His graceful sandals bound beneath his feet ;

Took too his trusty lance, poised to his hand ;

And ere he to the city bent his steps, 5

His faithful swineherd with these words addressed :

“ Father, I now am for the city bound,

So that my mother see me ; for I ween,

Until she see me, she will never stay

Her grievous wailing and her tearful sighs. 10

Now these are my commands to thee : to guide
The stranger thither ; this unhappy one,
Into our city, that he there may beg :
And let whoever will, provide for him
His meat and drink. I, who have other cares, 15
Cannot put up with every one who comes.
And if the stranger be dissatisfied,
The worse for him : I love to speak the truth."

Ulysses, fruitful in resource, replied :

"Dear youth, I have no craving here to stay : 20
A beggar in the city better fares
Than in the fields ; and let him give who will.
I have no lust to stay about the farm,
And orders from a master to obey.
Nay, go thyself, and let him be my guide 25
Whom thou commandest ; only let me rest
Until I at the fire can warm myself,
And the sun shines ; for pitifully thin
My garments are ; lest the hoar-frost at morn
Chill me : ye say your city is afar." 30
He spake ; Telemachus with hasty feet
Passed through the farmstead, brooding in his mind

Ill to the suitors as he went along.

And when he reached his palace, gay with life,

Against a lofty column of the hall 35

He leaning left his spear, and passed within,

And o'er the stony threshold bent his steps.

Him Euryclea first descried, his nurse,

As she was draping fleeces busily

O'er the rich sculptured chairs: with tearful cry 40

She rushed straight at him; and around him

flocked

All his unhappy father's waiting-maids,

And kissed his face, his shoulders, in their joy.

And from her chamber sprang Penelope,

Like Artemis, or golden Aphrodite; 45

And weeping threw her arms about her boy,

And kissed his face, and both his beaming eyes;

And midst her tears she spoke these winged words:

"Thou hast returned, my own Telemachus,

Thou sweet light of my eyes! I little thought 50

To see thee e'er again, when thou hadst sailed

For Pylos in thy ship; unknown to me,

And sore against my will; although it was

To seek for news of thy dear father's fate.

Now tell me all that thou hast seen and heard." 55

Telemachus, the prudent youth, replied :

"O mother mine, awake not grief in me,

Nor stir the soul within the breast of one

Who has but just escaped destruction sheer.

Do thou now take thy bath, and clothe thy limbs 60

With garments fair, and to thy upper room

Ascending, followed by thy serving-maids,

Pray thou to all the gods; and promise them

Full sacrifice, if Jove will only deign

Full vengeance for our wrongs to grant to us: 65

And I meanwhile will to the council go,

The stranger to invite, who hither came

On board with me; and whom I sent before,

With my companions, rivals of the gods.

I asked Piræus him to entertain, 70

And treat him with all honour in his home,

Until the time I should arrive myself."

He spake, and sank within her soul his speech,

Nor lightly fled away: she took her bath

And beauteous garments cast about her form, 75

And prayed to all the gods; and promised them
Full hecatombs, if Jove would only deign
Full vengeance for her wrongs to grant to her.

Telemachus then strode across the hall
With lance in hand, two fleet hounds at his heel, 80
And o'er him Pallas shed a wondrous grace;
And all the people gazed on him with awe:
Around him too the lordly suitors thronged,
'Neath kindly greeting hiding evil will.
But he avoided all the pressing crowd, 85
And went to take his seat by Mentor's side,
Where Antiphus and Halitherses sat,
They who his father's comrades were of old;
And they of his adventures questioned him.

Piræus, the stout spearman, then drew near, 90
And through the city he the stranger led;
Nor did Telemachus avoid his guest,
But he at once received him graciously; v
And him Piræus thus the first addressed:

"Telemachus, straight to my dwelling haste 95
Thy serving-maids, that I may send by them
The presents Menelaus gave to thee."

Telemachus, the prudent youth, replied :

“Piræus, we as yet can hardly tell

How our affairs may end ; it so may be 100

My haughty foes, the suitors, may succeed

In slaying me within my halls by craft ;

Then they themselves will share my heritage ;

And I would far prefer thou shouldst enjoy

Atreides' gifts, than any one of these : 105

But if I bring them to their death and doom,

I know thou wilt rejoice the gifts to bear

To me, once more rejoicing in my home.”

As thus he spake, he to the palace led

The stranger, who had suffered many toils ; 110

And when they reached the halls so gay with life,

Their mantles then they doffed, and laid them down

Upon the couches and the chairs of state ;

And were conducted to the polished baths,

Attended by the maids, who afterwards 115

With shining olive oil anointed them,

And mantles soft and tunics round them cast :

Then, issuing from the bath, they took their seats.

Meanwhile to wash their hands a serving-maid

From a rich golden ewer water poured 120

Into a silver basin, and laid out

The polished board ; the modest stewardess

Served bread and choice of viands from her store,

Right willingly ; and opposite the youth,

And close beside the threshold of the hall, 125

His mother took her seat, upon a couch

Reclining, weaving slender threads of wool.

They on the viands laid their ready hands.

When thirst and hunger both were satisfied,

The wise Penelope took up the word : 130

“Telemachus, my chamber I must seek

Right soon above ; and lay me on my couch,

Which miserable ever is to me,

And which is ever watered with my tears,

Since my Ulysses went to Ilium, 135

With the two sons of Atreus : but, alas !

Thou wilt not ere the haughty suitors come

Say plainly to me, if thou aught have heard

Touching thy father's fate and home return ? ”

Telemachus, the prudent youth, replied : 140

“ O mother, I will tell thee all the truth :

At Pylos we arrived ; and Nestor, there,
The shepherd of the folk, me entertained
With every kindness in his stately halls,
As would a father his belovèd son, 145
Who after absence long has just returned ;
With loving-kindness equal e'en to this
Did he receive me, with his noble sons :
But touching my unhappy father's fate,
Naught could he say ; for nothing had he heard 150
From mortal man of him, alive or dead.
And he to Menelaus sent me on,
The son of Atreus, hero of the lance,
With horses and a well-appointed car ;
And Argive Helen there I saw, for whom 155
Both Greeks and Trojans many woes endured
By the gods' will. He of the battle-cry,
So cheering in the fray, then asked of me
Wherefore to Lacedæmon I had come ;
And I recounted all my tale to him, 160
And with these words he answered in reply :
“ Ye gods ! that men contemptible should dare
To dream that they might occupy the couch

Of him the dauntless chief! as if the hind
Should lay her suckling young ones in the haunt 165
Of the dread lion: she with anxious gaze
Scans, as she feeds, the steep and thick ravines:
But he returns, and finds them in his lair;
Dire is the vengeance he inflicts on them,
Dire will Ulysses' vengeance be on these. 170
If Father Jove, Apollo, and Minerva
Would but vouchsafe Ulysses to appear,
Such as he was when once in well-built Lesbos
He forward strode to wrestle in a match
With Philomeleus' son, and hurled him down; 175
A dreadful fall, at which the Greeks rejoiced:
Could he but thus your mother's suitors meet,
For all this rabble then how swift the fate!
Bitter for them the wedding feast would be.
As to the questions which thou askest me 180
So urgently, I will not thee deceive,
Nor from the truth will swerve in aught I say:
All that the aged genius of the sea,
Whose words are true, related, I will tell;
Nor will I aught conceal or screen from thee. 185

“‘He told me he had seen him in an isle
In bitter woe, in fair Calypso’s halls,
And she the goddess still detains him there
By force, nor can he reach his native land ;
No comrades has he, and no ships with oars, 190
To bear him o’er the bosom of the deep.’

“Thus Menelaus spoke, the spearman brave :
And when all this I learned, I sailed away ;
And the Immortals sent a favouring breeze,
Which swiftly bore me to my native shore.” 195

Thus spake Telemachus ; and deeply stirred
Her heart within her bosom with his words.
The godlike Theoclymenus then spoke :

“O guileless consort of Laertes’ son,
Little he knew ; but mark thou well my speech, 200
For I will now my prophecy unfold
Clearly, nor shroud my words in mystery.
Bear witness, Jove, the chief of all the gods,
This hospitable table, and the hearth
Of good Ulysses which I now approach : 205
Ulysses now is in his native land ;
Resting, or hither stealing in, unknown ;

And will demand an answer for his wrongs:

And for the suitors all, he now prepares

A woe; and this the augury I learned 210

And told the princes on board his gallant ship."

To him the chaste Penelope replied:

"O stranger, may thy speech accomplished be;

Then shouldst thou know my love and gratitude,

And he who saw thee would account thee blest." 215

Thus they with one another converse held.

The lordly suitors, in their wonted place,

Before Ulysses' palace, were employed

In hurling quoits and hunting spears in sport,

Upon the courtyard levelled skilfully : 220

And when the evening meal-time had arrived,

And when the herdsmen from the fields all round

Drove in the sheep, as they were wont to do,

Medon addressed them thus; their favourite

Was he of all the heralds of the house, 225

And aye was present at their revelling:

"Young princes, now ye have enjoyed your sport,

Come to the palace, and prepare the feast;

At the right time it is no ill to eat."

He spake, and at his word they all arose ; 230
The palace halls they entered, gay with life ;
Their mantles straight they doffed and laid them down
Upon the couches and the chairs of state ;
And lusty sheep and fatted goats they slew,
A heifer from the fold, and well-fed swine ; 235
The feast preparing with accustomed rites.

Meanwhile the trusty swineherd and the chief
Made ready speedily to bend their steps
Towards the city, from the upland fields.
Then first began the swineherd, chief of men : 240

“ O stranger, to the city thou wouldst go
This day, and so my master gave command ;
For my part, I would rather keep thee here
To guard the folds : but him I reverence,
And dread he after may find fault with me ; 245
A master's chidings heavy are to bear :
So let us go, for now the day is spent ;
Soon colder will it be towards eventide.”

Wary Ulysses answered in reply :

“ I hear and mark ; thou speak'st to one who heeds. 250
Forward ! so thou wilt guide me all the way ;

But if thou hast a staff all ready cut,
Give it to me to stay my tottering steps;
For said ye not the way was slippery?"

And straightway then he o'er his shoulders cast 255
His shabby wallet, tattered all and torn,
And slung with twisted cord; and as he wished,
Eumæus placed a staff within his hands :
And so the pair set out, and left behind
The herdsmen and the dogs to guard the farm. 260
And thus he to his city led the King,
In a poor beggar's guise; infirm and old,
Tottering upon his staff, and vilely clad.

And now they fared along the craggy path,
The city near approaching; and they reached 265
The crystal fountain, fenced with goodly stones,
From which the citizens their water drew;
Which Ithacus and Neritus in turn,
And last Polyctor, built and beautified :
There all around a row of poplar trees, 270
Fed by the moisture, grew; and from on high
Adown the rock the ice-cold water fell;
And on it stood an altar to the Nymphs,

On which the wayfarers their offerings made.

Melanthius, the son of Dolius, 275

There overtook them, as the choicest goats

He then was driving for the suitors' feast

Towards the town; two herdsmen followed him.

Soon as he saw them he upbraided them,

And shouted out with coarse, reviling words, 280

And moved to anger deep Ulysses' heart:

“ See how one scoundrel such another leads!

Thus aye the gods bring like and like together!

Thou wretched swineherd! whither dost thou guide

This filthy beggar to defile our feasts? 285

Who standing at the posts of many a door

Will scratch his itching shoulders, begging scraps.

No goodly gifts will he receive, forsooth!

No sword or brazen bowl when he departs!

But let him be my thrall and watch the folds; 290

And he shall sweep the pens of filth, and bear

Green fodder for the kids; and the skimmed milk

Will put some flesh upon his scraggy shanks:

But no desire has he for honest work,

Nor aught but evil has he learned to do; 295

Far rather beg for alms among the folk,
And cringe for food to fill his ravening maw.
And now I tell thee what will surely be :
If in the palace of our godlike chief
He dare to show himself, and there be seen, 300
The footstools flying from the princes' hands
About his head will ache his ribs, I ween."

He spoke, and in his folly leaped at him,
And kicked him on the hip ; unmoved, the chief
Stirred not, nor from the footpath did he swerve : 305
He hung in doubt whether to rush on him,
And with his staff to smite him on the spot
Dead, or if he should lift him from the ground
And hurl him down head foremost to the earth ;
But he restrained himself, and curbed his ire. 310
The swineherd, looking at Melanthius,
Reproached him, stretching forth his hands to heaven ;
And in these words uttered a fervent prayer :

"Ye Nymphs of running rills, daughters of Jove,
If e'er Ulysses has the haunches burnt 315
Of rams and goats in sacrifice to you,
Covering them up with fat, in order due ;

Oh hear my prayer! oh grant that he return!

May some divinity direct his steps!

Then all thy vaunting will he take from thee, 320

Which now thou wearest with so haught a mien;

Idling about the city from thy charge:

So evil shepherds ever mar their flocks."

And thus Melanthius to him replied:

"Ye gods! how bravely talks this crafty hound! 325

Whom I on board a black-hulled ship some day

Will carry off, afar from Ithaca,

That he may win me money for my pains;

If but Apollo of the silver bow

Will deign this day to slay Telemachus, 330

In his own halls; or if he may but fall

Before the suitors' arms; as far away

Ulysses long ago has met his fate."

He spoke, and left them creeping slowly on,

And he strode swiftly off; and soon he reached 335

The palace of the King. He entered in,

And 'mongst the youthful princes took his seat,

And opposite Eurymachus; with him

In favour was he: and the serving-men

Before him placed a portion from the joints; 340

And bread the modest stewardess laid out

For him to eat. But when the two drew near,

Ulysses and the swineherd, they stood still :

Around them floated a melodious sound

From the curved lyre ; for Phemius began 345

Just then to strike the opening chords of song.

Whereat the chief upon the swineherd laid

His hand ; and then addressed him with these words :

“Eumæus, these fair buildings needs must be

The palace of Ulysses ; easily 350

May they be known and recognised by all :

One pile upon another leans ; the hall

Is girt around with walls and battlements ;

And solid are the double gates ; no foe

Through them could force his way : and I perceive 355

That many men are banqueting therein,

For odours savoury are wafted thence,

And thence resounds the lyre ; which aye the gods

Have made to be the fellow of the feast.”

Then thus, Eumæus, didst thou answer him : 360

“Rightly hast thou divined, as thou art wont

In all things else to be intelligent.

But let us now weigh well what we shall do :

Either go thou before me to the halls

And face the suitors, while I here remain ; 365

Or if thou wilt, wait thou, while I go first :

Only delay not here outside the door,

Lest one may see thee here, and strike at thee,

Or may some missile hurl to injure thee.

I tell thee this : decide now for thyself." 370

The suffering chief then answered in reply :

"I hear and mark ; thou speak'st to one who heeds.

Do thou go first, and I will here remain ;

With wounds and blows I have acquaintance made,

But dauntless is my soul : for many toils 375

Have I endured in war and midst the waves ;

What yet I have to suffer must be borne.

But craving hunger will not be denied,—

That cursed thing, which brings so many ills ;

And for the sake of which men oft have launched 380

Their gallant ships upon the watery waste,

To bring destruction on their enemies."

As thus with one another they conversed,

A dog which there was lying raised his head,
And pricked his ears; Argus the hound was called, 385
Owned by Ulysses, the enduring chief,
And bred by him; who sailed for sacred Troy
Before he e'er enjoyed his services:
But him the youths aforetime took afield,
To hunt the hare, the chamois, and the roe. 390
Now there he lay, his master far away,
Neglected, on a dunghill; which was piled
Before the gateway in a mighty heap,
From all the mules and oxen, that the thralls
Might bear it off to dress the chief's broad lands: 395
There Argus lay, his coat with vermin filled;
And as he saw Ulysses near him stand,
He dropped his ears, and feebly wagged his tail.
No longer had he strength to drag himself
Towards his master; who his glances turned 400
Aside, and wiped away a tear by stealth,
So that Eumæus saw it not; and said:
"Eumæus, it is very strange to me
To see this hound upon the dunghill lie:
Beauteous he is in form, but I know not 405

If he were fleet of foot as beautiful;
Or if he merely were a trencher dog,—
One of those useless curs which masters fear
And pamper, but for show and not for use.”

Thus, O Eumæus, didst thou answer him: 410

“Ah, yes! in very truth this was the dog
Of him who died afar; and if but now
His form and strength of limb remained the same
As when Ulysses sailed away for Troy,
His speed and power with marvel wouldst thou see: 415

In the recesses of the tangled glade
No beast could him escape when he pursued;
And matchless was his scent upon the trail.
Now he lies there in misery; his lord
Has perished, from his native land afar, 420
And heedless women care not for his wants:

For slaves, when not beneath their master's eye,
Have little will their duty to perform.
Yea! Jove all-seeing, half his virtue robs
From the unhappy man, on that dark day 425
On which he drags him down to slavery.”

He spake, and sought the palace gay with life,

And went among the suitors in the hall:

And the dark doom of death on Argus fell,

When he again upon Ulysses gazed, 430

As in the twentieth year he home returned.

And first Telemachus, the godlike youth,

Descried the swineherd passing through the hall:

At once he beckoned that he should approach.

Eumæus looked around, and from the floor 435

He lifted up a stool which there was lying,

On which the carver ayè was wont to sit,

Whose duty was to carve the mighty joints

For the proud suitors, at their banqueting:

This to the table of Telemachus 440

He carried, and before him sat him down;

And him the herald with a portion served,

And from a basket brought him bread to eat.

Soon after him Ulysses followed close;

And in a beggar's guise, infirm and old, 445

Tottering upon a staff, and vilely clad,

He now approached his palace and his home:

And just within the doorway sat him down

Upon the ashen threshold; and he leaned

Against the door-posts made of cypress wood, 450
Which, long ago, the workman with deft skill
Had wrought and carved, and with a plumbline squared.

Telemachus the swineherd called to him,
As from the shapely basket he took up
A loaf of bread and viands plentiful, 455
Much as both outstretched hands could grasp, and said :

“This to the stranger give, and order him
To go among the princes asking alms :
For shame sits ill upon a needy man.”

He spoke ; and when the swineherd heard his
speech, 460

He him approached, and spoke these winged words :

“Telemachus, O stranger, sends thee these ;
And bids thee go around the company,
And that thou ask for alms of all of them ;
For shame, he says, a beggar ill beseems.” 465

Crafty Ulysses answered in reply :

“Vouchsafe, almighty Jove, to grant to me,
That young Telemachus may happy be ;
May he accomplish all his heart desires !”

And he received the food with both his hands, 470

And laid it down before him, at his feet,
Upon his shabby wallet; and he ate
While rang the minstrel's song throughout the hall :
And as the godlike minstrel ceased his chant,
He finished eating, and with voices loud 475
The suitors talked amidst their banqueting.

Minerva then drew near Laertes' son,
And urged him on to gather scraps of food
Among the suitors, that he should find out
Who of them righteous and unrighteous were ; 480
And yet she had no mind that one of them
Should be allowed to shun his evil fate :
And so he went and begged from every man
Throughout the company from right to left,
With outstretched hands, as one to begging wont ; 485
And they with pity stricken gave to him,
And gazed with wonder at him, as they asked
Who he might be, and whence he had arrived.
Melanthius, the goatherd, them addressed :

"List, O ye suitors of the peerless Queen, 490
About the stranger what I have to say ;
For but a while ago I met with him,

And him the swineherd then was leading hither :

But what his race may be, I cannot tell."

Thus spake Melanthius. With scolding words 495
Antinous the swineherd thus rebuked :

"Vilest of swineherds, wherefore hast thou brought
This fellow to our city? Have we not
Plenty of other vagabonds at hand,
And sturdy beggars, kill-joys of our feasts? 500
Or dost thou grieve there are not yet enough
Assembled here thy master's cheer to eat;
And so thou hast invited this choice guest?"

And thus, Eumæus, didst thou answer him :

"Antinous, although thou noble art, 505
Not noble are thy words. Who would invite
A stranger-guest to come from other lands,
Except he were a craftsman for the folk;
A prophet, or a leech to heal the sick,
A skilful carpenter; or bard divine, 510
Who with his song may charm the listener?
These are sought out by men o'er all the earth,
But surely none a beggar would invite,
Who could but be a burthen to himself.

But thou, of all the suitors, art most harsh 515

To all Ulysses' servants; chief to me:

But for my part I heed thee not; so long

As wise Penelope within these halls

Is living still, and prince Telemachus."

Telemachus, the prudent youth, replied: 520

"Be silent, nor before me answer him

With prating words: as for Antinous,

He has been ever wont to stir up strife

With bitter speeches in his evil guise;

And others urges on to do the like." 525

And, turning to Antinous, he said:

"Antinous, thou watchest o'er my goods

With care, as would a father for a son:

Thou wouldst drive off this stranger from my halls

With thy imperious words; which god forbid! 530

Give to him; I put no restraint on thee,

But urge thee so to do: and let no thought

Of reverence for my mother thee withhold;

Nor aught that any of my servants say,

Who in my godlike father's palace dwell. 535

But such is not the thought within thy breast;

Thyself to feast is much more to thy mind
Than aught to any needy one to give."

To him Antinous in answer spoke :

"Telemachus, thou youth of lofty speech, 540
Thou talkest wildly in thy boundless wrath.
If all the suitors were to offer him
A present such as this one, his respect
Would for a three months' space hold him aloof."

And then he grasped the footstool with his hand 545
On which, as he was feasting at his ease,
His shapely feet were lying as he spoke;
And underneath the table where it lay
He showed it; but the others, all of them,
Gave to Ulysses, and his scrip they filled 550
With bread and viands. He was moving off
Towards the threshold that he might sit down,
And taste the gifts the princes gave to him,
But stopped before Antinous, and said :

"Wilt thou not also give? To me thou seemest 555
Not the most mean, but noblest of them all;
And, like a king among the chiefs, art thou :
Therefore more generously than the rest

Bread shouldst thou give ; and o'er the boundless
earth

Then will I vaunt thy generosity. 560

I once had fortune, and I dwelt at ease

In a rich palace ; to the wanderer

I ever gave, whoever he might be,

Whate'er the need which brought him to my door ;

And slaves in thousands had I then, as well 565

As many other things which men possess

Who live at ease, and who are wealthy called.

But Jove himself, son of the Ancient One,

Has ta'en all this away : such was his will.

He put it in my mind to make a voyage 570

With roving corsairs to the Egyptian shore ;

A weary voyage, which was to ruin me :

When in the Egyptian stream I had arrived,

I moored my galleys swinging to the oar ;

And ordered my companions to remain 575

Close by the galleys, and to guard them there :

And scouts I forward sent to view the land.

But giving way to over-recklessness,

And trusting to their might, they sacked and spoiled

The goodly lands of the Egyptians; 580

Their wives and children took, and slew the men.

The clamour of the fray the city reached;

And when they there the shouts for succour heard,

They came in numbers as the dawn appeared:

The plain was filled with warriors and steeds, 585

And gleaming bronze; then Jove the Thunderer

A fatal panic on my comrades cast;

None dared to stand his ground before the foe,

And ruin hemmed us in on every side.

Then many of my men the foemen slew 590

With sword and lance; and some they took alive,

Saved but to drudge for them in slavery.

Me to a stranger-guest of theirs they gave

Who happened to be there, to take with him

To Cyprus,—Dmetor, son of Iasus, 595

And who in Cyprus holds the kingly sway:

Thence I have hither come with all my woes."

Antinous then shouted in reply:

"What evil genius brings this woe to us,—

This pest to mar our feast? Stand off, I say, 600

Back from my table; get thee hence from me,

Unless thou hast a mind right soon to find
A bitter Egypt, and a Cyprus too!
A sturdy beggar art thou, without shame,
And none thou sparest; going thy rounds to all, 605
Who give like fools: it is not charity,
Nor kindness, to give from others' store,
When every one has more than he can eat."

The wary chief then moved away, and said:

"Thy understanding matches not thy form, 610
In sooth; nor wouldst thou give a grain of salt
In thine own house to any one in need;
For now, when sitting at another's board,
Thou wilt not spare a morsel of thy bread,
From all the plenty that around thee lies." 615

He spake; Antinous was wild with wrath,
And with a furious glance spoke winged words:

"Thou shalt not quit this hall in cheerful mood,
I ween; take this for thy reviling prate."

He spoke, and seized the footstool in his hand 620
And hurled it; and it smote him in the back,
In the right shoulder-blade: he like a rock
Stood firm, nor quailed beneath Antinous' blow;

But shook his head in silence, brooding ill.

Straightway he sought the threshold and sat down, 625

And laid his wallet by, well stored with food;

And then addressed the suitors with these words:

“Ye princely suitors of the far-famed Queen,

List that ye hear the words I crave to say:

There is no cause for sorrow or regret, 630

When a man fighting for his household goods,

Or for his oxen, or his snow-white sheep,

Is stricken: but e'en now Antinous

Has smitten me for wretched hunger's sake,—

That cursed thing, the cause of so much ill. 635

But sooth! if gods and dread Erinnyes

Watch o'er the wretched, may Antinous

Before his marriage meet the doom of death!”

Then spoke Antinous, Eupeithes' son:

“Sit still, and eat in silence, or begone! — 640

Else, stranger, if thou still persist to prate,

The youths shall drag thee by the arms and legs

Out of the hall, and flay thy skin from thee.”

He spake, but they were angered mightily,

And one of these proud youths addressed him thus: 645

“Antinous, it was a cruel act
To smite this wretched one: woe worth to thee!
If he should be mayhap a heavenly god!
For verily the gods all shapes assume,
And in the guise of strangers from afar 650
They wander through our cities, and observe
The arrogance and kindliness of men.”

Thus spake the suitors; but he heeded not:
As for Telemachus, deep anguish swelled
Within his soul for him the stricken one: 655
No tear did he let fall, but silently
He shook his head, and brooded vengeance deep.
And when the chaste Penelope had heard
Of him who thus was smitten in the hall,
She with these words addressed her serving-maids: 660

“May the great Archer smite the smiter thus!”

Eurynomé, the stewardess, rejoined:

“Oh may there be an answer to our prayers!
Then none of these will see the thronéd Dawn.”

To her replied the chaste Penelope: 665

“Yes, nurse, they all are enemies to us,
And evil plot; but this Antinous,

More than they all, is like an Evil Fate.

For lo you now! this wretched stranger comes

Here in his wanderings, and begs for alms, 670

As poverty compels him so to do;

And when the others all have filled his scrip,

And alms have given, he his footstool hurls

And smites him full on the right shoulder-blade!"

Thus, in her upper chamber where she sat, 675

The Queen held converse with her handmaidens.

Godlike Ulysses finished his repast,

When she the swineherd called to her and said:

"Eumæus, call this stranger here to me,

That I may greet him; and may ask of him 680

If he perchance have heard of any news

Of my Ulysses, the undaunted chief;

Or if he may have seen him: one he seems

Who has a pilgrim been in many lands."

And thus, Eumæus, didst thou answer her: 685

"If but the princes would now hold their peace,

O Queen, so thou couldst hear, the tale he told

Would as a spell bewitch thy gentle heart.

Three nights, three days I kept him in my hut;

For first to me he came, when from some ship 690

He had escaped : and during all that time

He had ~~not~~ finished all his tale of woe.

And as a man may on a minstrel gaze,

Who from the gods has learnt the cunning skill

Mortals to witch with his soul-stirring lays, 695

Who cannot choose but listen as he sings ;

Thus did he keep me spell-bound in my hut.

He says he dwells in Crete, of Minos' race,

And that Ulysses was his father's guest ;

Thence he has come, and now has reached our shores 700

Tossed up and down, enduring many woes :

And he affirms that he has heard it said

Ulysses now is near, in the rich land !

Of the Thesprotians, and yet alive ;

And many treasures will bring home with him." 705

Then him the wise Penelope addressed :

"Go call him to me, that he to my face

May tell all this himself. As for the rest,

They may disport themselves without my gates,

Or here within my palace, as they list ; 710

While their possessions in their homes remain

Untouched; their stores of bread and fragrant wine;
Save what their servants for their use consume.
But these come daily flocking to our house;
Oxen and sheep and goats they sacrifice, 715
And feast, and drink with reckless wastefulness
The sparkling wine: waste swallows up our all.
We lack a man such as Ulysses was,
To ward away this curse from house and home.
Oh! if Ulysses would but come himself, 720
And tread once more again his native soil!
Soon would he, with his son, upon our foes
Bring vengeance, for their lawless outrages.”
Telemachus sneezed loudly as she spoke,
And all the roof re-echoed with the noise; 725
Then laughed Penelope, and hurriedly
These winged words she to Eumæus spoke:
“Go thou at once for me, the stranger bring
Without delay before me; dost not hear
How my son sneezed when all my words were said? 730
Therefore destruction for the suitors all
Will not be unaccomplished; and not one
Will 'scape the death and doom prepared for him.

And this I tell thee, fix it in thy mind :

When I have proof this stranger speaks the truth, 735

I will not fail to clothe him head to foot

In mantle, tunic, and in garments fair."

She spake ; the swineherd, when he heard her words,
Went speedily, and standing near the chief

He thus addressed him with these wing'd words : 740

"Stranger, Penelope would speak with thee,

The prince's mother ; fain would she converse

With thee about her husband in her grief.

And, father, when she finds thou speakest truth,

A cloak and tunic she will give to thee, 745

Of all which things thou hast so great a need.

Moreover thou mayst beg among the folk

For bread ; that he may give to thee who will."

The godlike and enduring chief replied :

"Eumæus, I will all the truth declare 750

To wise Penelope, Icarius' child ;

For all about him do I know right well,

And he and I the self-same woe have borne :

But all this band of suitors do I dread,

These cruel men ; whose pride and arrogance 755

O'ertop the very iron firmament:

For when this fellow smote me even now,

As I went round the hall and did no ill,

And injured me, no one prevented him:

Not one of them; no, not Telemachus. 760

Therefore I beg thee urge Penelope,

Much as she longs to hear my tale, to stay

Within the hall until the sun goes down:

Then she can ask me of her lord's return

Close seated by the fire; thou know'st thyself 765

That wretched are the garments which I wear;

For first to thee I came, a suppliant."

He spoke, and when the swineherd heard his words

He went away; and him Penelope,

Crossing the threshold, with these words addressed: 770

"Thou bring'st him not, Eumæus; why is this?

Has he exceeding dread of any one,

Or else is he ashamed to show himself

Within the palace? What is in his mind?

Shame ill befits the needy wanderer." 775

And thus, Eumæus, didst thou answer her:

"He speaks with reason, and he thinks with sense.

As any other might, he would avoid
The arrogance of these contemptuous men ;
Therefore he begs thee to await a while, 780
Until the sun go down : for thee, O Queen,
Thyself, it will be better that alone
Thou hear the stranger's words and question him."

Then him the chaste Penelope addressed :

"He wants not sense ; and it may well be so : 785
For amongst mortal men none else there are,
Who plot such mischief as these haughty ones."

The worthy swineherd, as the Queen thus spoke,
Among the crowd of suitors went his way,
When he had told her all he had to tell : 790
And to Telemachus he spoke swift words,
Keeping their heads together, in his ear,
So that the others should not hear his speech :

"Dear youth, to watch thy swine and all the
rest,

I now depart ; to guard thy goods and mine : 795
It is thy care to look to all things here ;
But first of all look keenly to thyself,
And be upon thy guard against all harm,

For many of the chiefs have ill intent ;
Whom Jove confound, ere they may injure us." 800

Telemachus, the prudent youth, replied :

"So be it, father, and ere evening fall
Do thou depart ; and by to-morrow's dawn
Return again, and goodly victims bring :
As for the matters here, they all shall be 805
A care to me and the immortal gods."

He spake ; the swineherd on the polished chair
Sat down again : when he with meat and drink
Was satisfied, he sought his charge, the swine,
And left the palace and its spacious courts, 810
With revellers thronged ; and they their pastime took
With song and dance ; and eventide drew near.

BOOK XVIII.

ARGUMENT.

Contest with Irus—Ulysses' warning to Amphinomus—Penelope appears before the suitors—Their conduct to Ulysses.

DAY 41.

AND then a strolling beggar thither came,
Who through the town of Ithaca was wont
To beg, and eat and drink voraciously;
Unmatched was he in greedy gluttony;
Courage and strength he lacked, though huge his
bulk:

5

Arnaïus was the name which at his birth
His mother gave to him: but all the youths,
Because he at the 'hest of every one
On errands used to go, him Irus called.
And when he came, he strove to drive away

10

The chief from his own house; and, threatening him,
He thus addressed him with these hasty words:

“Now get thee from the door, old vagabond,
Lest by the heels I drag thee hence forthwith.
Dost thou not mark that now the princes all 15
Make signs to me, as giving me command
To drive thee off? I am ashamed for thee;
Begone! or soon we two will come to blows.”

The chief looked sternly at him, and replied:

“Fellow, how now! by neither word nor deed 20
Do I offend thee; nor do I begrudge
That any give to thee, if e'er so much:
The threshold has sufficient room for both.
Thou hast no need to grudge another's goods:
Methinks thou art a wanderer as I, 25
And plenty can the gods vouchsafe to all:
Provoke me not too much, lest in my wrath,
Though old I be, I stain thy chest and lips
With blood; then on the morrow there will be
Quiet for me: nor wilt thou seek again 30
The palace of Laertes' son, I ween.”

In anger then the stroller Irus cried:

“Lo now! how glibly talks this greedy knave!
Like some old crone before the fire he prates:
But I will leave him in an evil case, 35
And smite him right and left, and from his jaw
Will knock the teeth out of this guzzling swine.
Now gird thy loins that all our mettle see;
But no, thou wilt not dare to fight with me.”

Thus they in anger high together strove, 40
Before the threshold of the lofty gate;
Antinous the noisy quarrel heard,
And softly laughing to the suitors called:

“O friends, we never had such luck as this:
What sport the gods have brought beneath our roof! 45
Lo! Irus and the stranger quarrelling
Would come to fisticuffs; now stir them on.”

He spoke; they all with laughter loud sprang up,
And round the beggars in their tatters flocked.
To them Antinous addressed these words: 50

“ O noble suitors, listen while I speak.
Here sausages of goatsmeat on the coals
Are lying, which, right rich and savoury,
We now are keeping for our evening meal:

Let him who is the victor of these two, 55

And proves himself to be the better man,

Help himself freely of these sausages.

And henceforth he shall ever feast with us ;

None other beggar will we e'er allow

To come within these walls, and beg for alms." 60

Thus spoke the prince, and they approved his words.

Ulysses in his subtlety then said :

"O friends, it is not possible for me,

An aged man, o'ercome with misery,

To battle with a man of youthful strength ; 65

But hunger urges me, that cause of woe,

To stand the chance of blows and violence :

But swear now all of you a mighty oath,

That none of you, supporting Irus' cause,

Will with a heavy hand strike a foul blow, 70

And smite me down, for him my enemy."

He spoke ; they took the oath as he required ;

And when they all the oath had ratified,

Telemachus in pride of strength thus spoke :

"If now thy gallant spirit and thy heart, 75

O stranger, urge thee to defend thyself

Against this man, of no one else have dread :
 Whoever of the chiefs lays hands on thee
 Will have to fight with many foes beside :
 I am thy host myself ; these princes twain, 80
 Antinous, Eurymachus as well,
 Are men of wisdom, and must needs consent."

He spake ; they all approved the words he said.
 Ulysses girt his rags about his loins,
 And bared his mighty thighs and shoulders broad, 85
 His chest and stalwart arms : and near at hand
 Pallas approached the shepherd of the folk
 Herself, and on his limbs the sinews swelled.
 The suitors all with wonder gazed at him,
 And one, then looking at his neighbour, said : 90

"This ireful Irus will a woful be,
 And soon a woe will bring upon himself :
 For now the aged man has girt his loins,
 See what a thigh he shows from out his rags !"

They spake ; and Irus showed a craven heart : 95
 But him the servants girded for the fight,
 And dragged him forth, though sore against his will,
 In fear ; the flesh was trembling on his limbs.

Antinous reproached him with these words:

“How now, thou bully! thou dost not deserve 100

To live or breathe, if in thy craven fear

Thou hast such wondrous dread of this old man,

O'erspent with misery he has endured.

And now I tell thee what will surely be:

If he shall prove himself the better man, 105

I in a black-hulled bark will ship thee off

To the mainland, to Echetus the king,

The cruel torturer of all mankind;

Who with the ruthless knife will shear away

Thy ears and nose; and tear thy vitals out, 110

And throw them to be eaten by the dogs.”

He spake, and all the more he shook with fear.

They led them forth, and both held up their hands:

The suffering chief debated in his mind

If he should smite him down, slain there outright, 115

Or stretch him to the earth with gentler blow;

And this to him in doubt appeared the best,

To smite him lightly, lest the Grecian chiefs

Might from his strength discover who he was.

Then they stood up, and Irus struck the chief 120

On the right shoulder; who let drive a blow
Full on the neck, below the ear, which crushed
The bones beneath it; and the purple blood
Spouted adown his mouth, and in the dust
He backwards groaning fell: and with his heels 125
He kicked the earth, while rattled in his jaws
His teeth. The noble suitors clapped their hands,
And laughed till out of breath: and then the chief
Dragged him throughout the doorway by the foot,
And through the hall and entrance of the porch; 130
And, propped against the courtyard outer wall,
He left him; placed a staff within his hands,
And then cried out to him with winged words:

“Sit there, and drive away the dogs and swine:
O’er strangers and o’er beggars lord no more, 135
Caitiff; lest thee a greater ill befall.”

And straightway then he o’er his shoulder cast
His shabby wallet, tattered all and torn,
And slung with twisted cord; and he came back
And on the threshold took his seat again. 140
With mirthful laughter turned within the halls
The suitors, greeting him with kindly words:

“Stranger, may Jove and the immortal gods
Grant that which most of all thou dost desire ;
May they fulfil for thee thy dearest wish, 145
Since this insatiable vagabond
Thou hast restrained from begging midst the folk :
Whom to the mainland we will ship away
Without delay, to Echetus the king,
The cruel torturer of all mankind.” 150

Thus spake they, and the godlike chief rejoiced
In this portending wish. Antinous
A mighty sausage, rich and savoury,
Before him placed ; for him two loaves of bread
Then from the basket brought Amphinomus, 155
And pledged him in a golden cup, and said :

“Hail, aged stranger! mayst thou happy be
Henceforth, though holden now by many woes!”

Wary Ulysses answered in reply :

“Amphinomus, an understanding man 160
Methinks thou art, such as thy father was,
Of whom I always heard a good report ;
’Twas said that Nisus of Dulichium
Was aye a princely and a noble chief :

They say thou art his son, and thou dost seem 165
 Gentle to be, and wise ; and for this cause
 I now address thee. Mark and heed my words :
 Of all the living beings which enjoy
 The breath of life, and move upon the earth,
 None is more subject to mischance than man : 170
 For when the gods afford him health and wealth,
 And all the joy of motion to his limbs,
 He thinks that ill will never find him out :
 But when the gods, who live in careless bliss,
 Bring woe on him ; then, struggle as he may, 175
 All this he must endure with constant mind :
 The mood of earth-born mortals changes thus,
 As he, the Father of both gods and men,
 Changes their day of bliss to one of woe.
 And happy among men had been my lot, 180
 But that I, trusting to my father's power,
 Backed by my kith and kin, and giving way
 To the full lust of violence and wrong,
 Did many a lawless and unrighteous deed.
 Therefore let no man throw away from him 185
 The sway of law and right ; all the gods' gifts

Let him receive in silent thankfulness.

And lo! such lawless and unrighteous deeds

The suitors now contriving do I see;

Wasting the goods, dishonouring the spouse 190

Of him who, now I tell thee, will not long

Be absent from his friends and native land;

But near at hand is he: and may some god

Direct thee homewards that thou meet him not,

When he returns to his dear native soil! 195

For when he stands beneath his palace roof,

And meets the suitors here, 'twixt him and them

Not bloodless will the parting be, I ween."

He spake, and made libation ere he drank

The wine; and to the prince Amphinomus 200

Gave back the cup, and placed it in his hands:

But he with troubled heart went through the hall

And sadly shook his head; in truth his soul

Foreboded ill, nor could he shun his doom:

Minerva held him fast, with no escape, 205

That he might fall beneath the hands and spear

Of young Telemachus; and on the chair

From which he had arisen, he sat down.

Then blue-eyed Pallas wrought upon the mind
Of chaste Penelope, Icarius' child, 210
That she before the suitors should appear ;
And thus should kindle in her wooers' soul
Hopes wild and vain, and thus that she should win
More admiration than she had before,
Both from her lord and husband and her son. 215
And with a little causeless laugh she said :

“Eurynomé, I wish, I know not why,
Nor had the wish before, to show myself
Before the suitors, hateful as they are :
And to my son I fain would say a word 220
Of warning, that may better be for him ;
So that he seek not thus, without reserve,
These proud men's company : who speak him fair,
But evil in their thoughts for him prepare.”

Eurynomé, the stewardess, replied : 225

“All that thou say'st is rightly said, my child.
Speak to thy son at once, nought hide from him :
But first refresh thyself, and bathe thy limbs ;
Anoint thy cheeks ; and thy fair countenance
Disfigure thou no more by shedding tears. 230

Go ; it is grievous ever thus to weep ;
For lo ! thy son is all that thou couldst wish,
For whom thou prayedst to the Immortals oft
That thou shouldst see him grown to manhood's
prime."

And her the chaste Penelope addressed : 235

"Eurynomé, with all thy loving care 4

Talk not of this, that I should heed again
To bathe my limbs or to anoint myself :
For all the beauty which I ere possessed
The gods who in Olympus dwell have marred 240
For ever, since he left me with his ships.
But summon now to come to me at once
Hippodameia and Antinoé,

That they may stand beside me in the hall :
I shame to go alone amidst the chiefs." 245

As thus she spake, the aged stewardess
Went through the hall to tell the serving-maids
To come in haste, their mistress to attend.
But then the Blue-eyed other plans contrived ;
She on Icarius' daughter cast the spell 250
Of gentle slumber : falling on her couch,

She softly slept, with all her limbs relaxed,
So that the lovely goddess should the while
Shed o'er her gifts divine; and thus the chiefs
Should gaze with spell-bound wonder on her charms. 255
And first her lovely countenance she cleared
From stains of grief, with that ambrosial sheen
With which the fair crowned Aphrodite is wont
To be anointed, when she deigns to join
The Graces in the dance, which charms the soul. 260
She made her form more round and beautiful,
Her skin more fair than fresh-cut ivory.
And when the goddess thus had wrought her spells,
She vanished; and the fair-armed handmaidens
Approached with sound of voices through the hall, 265
And then the charm of slumber left the Queen.
She brushed her hand across her cheeks, and said:
 "Ah me! how gentle was the dreamless trance
Which wrapped my tortured senses in its folds!
If the pure Artemis would now but deign 270
To grant me death as gentle, now at once!
So that I, wretched one, no longer waste
My life in longing for my fondly loved,

My husband; him with every virtue fraught,
The bravest and the best of all the Greeks." 275

Her gorgeous upper chamber then she left,
Even as she spoke, nor unattended she;
For down the stairs descended maidens twain
Following the lovely lady. As she reached
The suitors at the threshold of the hall, 280

Carved with consummate workmanship, she paused,
And o'er her cheeks let down the gauze-like veil:
On either side of her, with modest mien,
A handmaid stood. The suitors gazed at her,
Their trembling limbs unstrung: desire bewitched 285
Their senses with its spell; each madly longed
To be the favoured lover of the Queen;
When she addressed her darling son, and said:

“Telemachus, thy judgment and thy thoughts
No longer steadfast are, as once they were: 290
Yet when a child thou didst show signs of wit;
But now, when in the pride of youth and strength,
And when a stranger looking at thy form
And manly beauty could not choose but say
Thou wast the offspring of a noble chief, 295

Thy mind and judgment are no longer right.
Lo! what a deed has chancèd in thy halls!
Thou hast permitted that a stranger-guest
Should be mishandled thus: how would it be
If any guest who dwelt beneath thy roof, 300
Should suffer harm from treatment vile as this?
From all men wouldst thou earn reproach and shame."

Telemachus, the prudent youth, replied:

"Mother, I find no fault that thou art wroth;
For I have sense to heed and mark these things, 305
The good and bad, though but a while ago
A child I was: but powerless am I
All matters to devise with steadfastness.
These men around me, scheming villany,
Bewilder me; and none have I to help me. 310
Howe'er, this broil betwixt the stranger-guest
And Irus has not ended as they wished;
For he has proved himself the better man.
May Father Jove, Minerva, and Apollo
But grant that now the suitors tamed should be, 315
And hang their heads in sadness in our halls,
Some in the courtyard, some beneath our roof;

And each and all of these with unstrung limbs,
As now this Irus sits before our gates,
With nodding head, just like a drunken man, 320
Skill-less to stand upright upon his feet,
Or find his home, wherever it may be ;
His unstrung limbs lack strength to guide him thither."

As thus with one another they conversed,
Eurymachus Penelope addressed : 325

"Icarius' daughter, chaste Penelope,
If all the Grecian chiefs could see thee now,
Of those who in Ionian Argos dwell,
How many suitors more the morrow's dawn
Would bring to feast within thy palace halls! 330
In truth all ladies dost thou far excel,
In form, and beauty, and in constancy."

To him the chaste Penelope replied :

"Alas! Eurymachus, the immortal gods
Have marred for me whatever charm I had 335
Of form and beauty, when the Greeks embarked
For Ilium; and my husband went with them.
If he would but return, with loving care
To watch about my life; ay then indeed

Greater and brighter would my honour be : 340

But now I am in misery ; some god

Has many, many evils thrust on me.

Ah ! when about to leave his native shore,

'Twas my right hand he seized, and clasped my arm,

And well do I remember how he said : 345

‘Lady, I know right well the mailèd Greeks

Cannot expect all safely to return

From Troy ; for all men say the Trojan chiefs

Are warriors trained to hurl the lance with skill,

And draw the bow ; and from the car of war 350

Guide the swift-footed steeds ; which soon decide

The mighty contest in the well-matched fight :

Therefore I know not if god will vouchsafe

To bring me back, or if I there shall fall

Before the foe at Troy. Guard all I leave : 355

My father and my mother in my halls

Tend thou with watchful care, as now thou dost,

And with more thoughtful care when I am gone :

And when my boy becomes a bearded man,

Wed whom thou wilt, and leave the home now thine.’ 360

“’Twas thus he spoke, and thus all comes to pass :

“Icarius’ daughter, chaste Penelope,
Whatever gifts the princes bring thee here,

Receive; 'tis churlish to refuse a gift.
And we will take no other work in hand,
Nor go we hence in truth, until thou choose 385
The noblest one among us for thy lord."

He spake, and they approved the words he said,
And each a herald sent his gifts to bring.

A beauteous garment worked with quaint device
Was for Antinous brought; upon its hem 390
Were fastened brooches twelve, all wrought in gold,

With cunning clasps, to close its ample fold.
The servants fetched for prince Eurymachus
A necklace, wrought with wondrous workmanship:
The ornament was strung with golden beads, 395
With amber interchanged, bright as the sun.

And for Eurydamas the servants bore
Two ear-rings, deftly joined in triple drops;
Its sparkling splendour threw a light around.
And for Pisander, king Polycctor's son, 400

His servants from his palace brought for him
A carcanet, a jewel rich and rare.
Each of the princes gave a costly gift:
And then, ascending to her upper room,

The lovely lady left the company; 405

And the rich gifts her maide~~ns~~s brought to her.

Meanwhile the others turned them to the dance

And witching song, until the evening fell,

Nor did they cease when dusky evening fell,

Which found them revelling still in these delights. 410

Then cressets three were placed within the hall,

To give them light; and logs were laid at hand,

Dry-seasoned wood, well fit to feed the flame,

Fresh cloven by the axe; and chips withal.

The serving damsels of the unhappy chief 415

Took it in turn to keep the flame alive;

When them Ulysses with these words addressed:

“Ye maidens of Ulysses, of a lord

Absent so long, straight to your chambers hie,

And, sitting close beside your honoured Queen, 420

Rejoice her with your grateful ministry;

Turning the spindle in the halls above,

Or combing with your busy hands the wool:

And I will feed the fire to give them light.

E'en should they all remain till throned dawn, 425

They will not weary me, unwearied ever.”

He spoke; they at each other looked and laughed,
And rosy-cheeked Melantho him reviled:
The child of Dolius was she; the Queen
From childhood brought her up, and gave to her 430
Trinkets to please her; in return she gave
No thought of pity for Penelope;
But to Eurymachus her paramour
She dalliance yielded, and unlawful love.

With scornful words Ulysses she addressed: 435

“Thou miserable stranger! art distraught?
Be off to sleep beneath some workman’s roof;
Or gossip in the servants’ hall, not here.
Thou art audacious here to talk so loud
Amidst the chiefs, and hast no sense of shame: 440
Either thou art in drink, or aye thy mind
Is prone to make thee babble idle words;
Or is it that thou art beside thyself
Because the stroller Irus thou hast thrashed?
Beware, lest soon a better man than he 445
May make thy cock’s comb smart with his strong hands,
And send thee hence bedabbled with thy blood.”

With a stern glance at her, Ulysses spoke:

“How now, thou hussy! I will tell at once
Telemachus the words thou dar’st to say: 450
He will in pieces hew thy saucy limbs.”

He scared the women as he spoke these words;
They fled along the hall, and under them
Trembled their limbs with dread, for well they knew
That all the words he meant that he had said. 455
He, as he trimmed the blazing cressets’ flame,
Stood gazing at them all; and other thoughts
Surged through his mind as he stood gazing there,
Which should in truth not unaccomplished be.

But blue-eyed Pallas did not yet allow 460
The haughty suitors to restrain themselves
From grievous outrage; so that angry grief
Should sink more deeply in Ulysses’ soul.
Eurymachus, the son of Polybus,
His comrades first addressed, pointing his gibes 465
Against Ulysses; and their laughter raised:

“Ye princely suitors of the peerless Queen,
List that ye hear the words I crave to say:
’Tis not without the purpose of the gods
This man has to Ulysses’ palace come; 470

For now it seems to me a light appears
As if from burning torches from his head,
On which no vestige of a hair is seen."

And turning then, Ulysses he addressed,
Who cities and their strongholds had o'erthrown: 475

"Stranger, if I should take thee for my thrall,
Hast thou a will to be my servitor,
On my far lands? I would not stint thy wage.
Then thorns thou shouldst collect to hedge my fields,
And plant me trees to give a goodly shade; 480
And I would give thee bread throughout the year,
Clothe thee, and give thee sandals for thy feet.
But much I fear thou hast learned naught but ill,
And hast no will to put a hand to work:
Far rather wouldst thou beg amidst the folk, 485
And cringe for food to feed thy craving maw."

Wary Ulysses answered in reply:

"Eurymachus, would we might vie in toil
In springtide, when the days are lengthening out,
In the lush grass! If I had in my hands 490
A curv'd scythe, and if thou hadst the like,
We then might make a trial of our work,

Both fasting, till the darkness fell on us,
With ample grass for both of us to mow:
Or if we should a team of oxen drive, 495
Choice beasts and strong, dark brown, well fed with
grass,
Matched equally in age and power of draught,
With strength enduring; and the heavy clod
Should turn before the ploughshare in the earth
In a four-acred field; then shouldst thou see 500
That I could cut the furrow straight and deep:
Or if the son of Saturn should stir up
Strife on this very day; and I were armed
With shield and javelins twain, and brazen helm
Which fitted well my brow; me shouldst thou see 505
Amidst the very foremost in the fight,
Nor wouldst thou jeer me for my craving maw.
But thou art arrogant, and harsh thy mood;
A mighty lord thou seemest, and a brave!
But this is but because thou dost consort 510
With paltry comrades; men of little worth:
But if Ulysses should appear again,
Soon would his gates, though wide and broad they be,

Seem all too narrow for thy flight, and haste
To get beyond his threshold and his doors." 515

He spoke; Eurymachus was fiercely wroth,
And looking sternly at him spoke swift words:

"Thou wretched caitiff, I will work thee woe,
Who darest thus to wag thy tongue so loud,
Amidst the chiefs, and hast no sense of shame: 520
Thou art in drink, or aye mayhap thy mind
Is prone to make thee babble idle words:
Or is it that thou art beside thyself,
Because the stroller Irus thou hast thrashed?"

He spake these words and grasped a stool; the chief,
Fearing his threatening gesture, sat him down 526
Close by the knees of prince Amphinomus,
Him of Dulichium; missing his aim,
The other smote the youth who served the wine,
On his right hand; fell clattering to the ground 530
The wine-jug which he held; and in the dust
Sprawled on his back the groaning cup-bearer.
The throng of suitors in the shadowy hall
With loud raised voices to each other spoke;
One as he looked towards his neighbour said: 535

“Would that this stranger vagabond had died
Ere he came here; for then had we been spared
This din and tumult which he brings with him!
Now o’er these begging knaves we come to strife,
Nor any pleasure do we now enjoy 540
From our good feast; ill gains the upper hand.”

Telemachus in pride of strength then spoke:

“Madmen, ye rave, and hold not in restraint
The arrogance which wine and feasting bring;
In sooth, some god now urges you to this: 545
But now your feast is ended, seek your homes,
And take your rest, where’er ye mind to go.
I drive no guest away, or high or low.”

Thus spake Telemachus; they bit their lips,
And gazed with wonder at the daring youth 550
Who thus addressed them; when Amphinomus,
The noble son of Nisus, who was sprung
From king Aretias, addressed them thus:

“O friends, let none of us with bickering words
Give angry answer to so just a speech; 555
Nor treat with contumely this stranger-guest,
Nor any of the servants of the house:

Now let the cup-bearer from right to left
Hand round the wine, that we libations make,
And all may seek their homes and take their rest: 560
And let us leave within Ulysses' halls
This stranger, in the youthful prince's care;
For in his palace he has refuge sought."

He spake; they all approved the words he said:
The herald of Dulichium, Mulius, 565
The gallant henchman of Amphinomus,
Mixed in the bowl the wine for all of them,
And passed it round to each of them in turn:
They made libations to the blessed gods,
And drank the luscious wine: when this was done 570
And all had made libation, all had quaffed,
Until the lust for wine was satisfied,
Each sought his home, and laid him down to rest.

BOOK XIX.

ARGUMENT.

Ulysses and Telemachus remove the arms from the hall —
Ulysses converses with Penelope—Is recognised by his nurse
Euryclea.

DAY 41.

AND thus the chief was left within the hall,
Scheming with Pallas o'er the suitors' doom;
When straightway to his son he spoke swift words:

“Telemachus, 'tis time thou now remove
The warlike weapons to a room within, 5
Together all of them; and with fair words
Beguile the suitors, if by any chance
They miss the arms, and question thee thereon:
‘Out of the smoke have I removed the arms,
For now no longer do they look the same 10

As when Ulysses left them here behind,
And he set out for Troy; but marred are they;
The vapour from the fire has dulled their sheen:
And for another reason of more weight,
Some god has surely prompted me to this; 15
For fear of strife among you in your wine,
Lest ye should wound each other, and thereby
Bring shame upon your wooing and your feast;
For iron of itself draws men thereto.'"

He spake; Telemachus obeyed his words, 20
And calling Euryclea her addressed:

"Nurse, prithee keep the women surely locked
Within the chambers, while I now remove
My father's goodly weapons safe away
Within the arm-room: in the hall they lie, 25
Uncared for, smoke-begrimed, since he has gone;
And, child-like, I have careless been of them:
But now I wish to store them safe away,
Where they are out of reach of fire and reek."

And his belovèd nurse to him replied: 30

"Dear boy, mayst thou henceforth with heedful care
Watch o'er thy house and all thy wealth beside!

But say, whom wilt thou in attendance have,
A torch to bear to light thee at thy task?
Since thou forbiddest now the handmaidens 35
To issue forth, who might have lighted thee?"

And thus the prudent youth to her replied:

"This stranger here; I will not suffer one
Who turns his hand to nought to eat my bread,
Though from a distant land he may have come." 40

He spake, nor idly sped away his words.
The chambers where they rested fair she locked;
And then Ulysses and his noble son
Arose in haste; the casques and bossed shields,
And the sharp pointed spears, they carried out; 45
And with a golden cresset in her hand,
Which shed a wondrous light, Pallas stood by.
The youth in wonder to his father cried:

"O father, what a marvel meets my eyes!
The walls, and fair arcades around the hall, 50
The beams of pine, the columns rising sheer,
Gleam as if lighted by a fiery blaze:
One of the dwellers of the boundless heaven,
Some god, is surely here within these walls."

Wary Ulysses answered in reply : 55

“Be silent, stay thy thoughts, and curb thy
tongue ;

The gods who dwell on high are ever thus ;
But lay thee down, and I will here remain,
That I the serving-maidens put to proof,
And their behaviour, and thy mother too : 60
She in her grief will doubtless question me.”

He spoke. Telemachus passed through the hall
And sought his chamber by the torches' light,
Where he was ever wont to take repose,
When sweet sleep fell on him ; and there he lay, 65
And there he rested till the dawn divine ;
The while the chief remained within the hall,
Scheming with Pallas o'er the suitors' doom.

Came from her chamber chaste Penelope,
Like Artemis or golden Aphrodite, 70
And by the fire for her a chair they placed,
Whereon she sat ; right deftly wrought and turned
Was it, with silver and with ivory :
Icmalius, the craftsman, wrought the chair,
From which he hung a footstool for her feet ; 75

And over all an ample fleece was cast,
And there reclined the wise Penelope.

The white-armed damsels from their chamber came,
And they removed the viands which remained,
An ample store; the tables and the cups, 80
From which those haughty princes now had drunk;
And from the braziers to the earth they cast
The embers of the fire, and piled anew
Fresh wood on high, both light and heat to give.
And then Melanthe yet a second time 85
Reproached Ulysses, and addressed him thus:

“Stranger, dost thou intend throughout the night
To loiter here, a torment to the house,
Ogling the maids? Vile caitiff! get thee forth;
Begone, and thankful be for thy good cheer: 90
Or else, belaboured with a fiery brand,
Thou shalt be thrust in haste without the door.”

With frowning glance, Ulysses answered her:

“Thou wretched woman, why dost thou persist
In persecuting me with spiteful heart? 95
Is it because I am not sleek and trim,
But sorry garments wear; and beg for alms,

As needs I must, from all the people round—
As needs must all the needy and the poor?
I once had fortune, and I dwelt at ease 100
In a rich palace; to the wanderer
I ever gave, whoever he might be,
Whate'er the need which brought him to my door:
And slaves in thousands had I then; as well
As many other things which men possess, 105
Who dwell at ease and who are wealthy called.
But Jove himself, son of the Ancient One,
Has swept all this away; such was his will.
And now do thou beware, lest thou lose all
Thy bravery, in which thou far outshinest. 110
Thy fellow-maids: thy mistress in her wrath
May punish thee; Ulysses may return,
As even now there is a hope he may:
Or has he perished, hopeless of return,
As ye may deem—his son Telemachus 115
Is here e'en now, and grown to man's estate
By favour of Apollo; nor will he
Put up with insolence from one of you
Within his halls: no child is he, I ween."

Penelope o'erheard him as he spoke, 120
And with these words reproached her handmaiden :

“How now, bold shameless hussy! dost thou think
That I am wholly blind to thy vile acts,
For which thou yet mayst answer with thy head?
Right well thou knewest all, didst hear me say 125
Myself, that I would fain within my halls
Question this stranger of my husband's fate;
For whom I suffer now so bitter grief!”

And, turning to the stewardess, she said :

“Eurynomé, bring here to me a chair, 130
And spread a fleece thereon, that at his ease
The stranger-guest may sit and talk to me,
And hear my words: I fain would question him.”

She spake; the stewardess with ready will
Brought forth a polished chair, and placed thereon 135
A fleece; and there sat down the suffering chief;
When thus Penelope began to speak :

“First, stranger, I must question thee myself.
Who art thou? what thy kindred and thy state?”

Wary Ulysses answered in reply: 140

“Lady, no mortal on the boundless earth

Can thee disparage, for thy fame extends
To heaven itself; as that of some just chief
Who fears the gods, and o'er his subjects rules
With righteous sway—many and brave are they: 145
For him the fertile earth bears corn and grain;
The trees with fruit are laden; and the sheep
Bring forth their lambs, and never fail to breed:
For him the sea yields plenteous store of fish;
Beneath his gentle rule the people thrive. 150
But question me of other things than this,
Nor ask me of my kindred and my home,
Lest thou o'erwhelm my soul with bitter woe,
As I recall the past; in very deed
Most wretched am I: but it skills me not, 155
Sighing and weeping, in a stranger's house
Ever to sit; 'tis irksome aye to weep:
The very slaves might chide me, or thyself,
And deem my senses were o'ercome with wine,
On seeing me thus drowned in floods of tears." 160
Then answered him the chaste Penelope:
"Ah! stranger, the immortal gods in truth
Have marred for me whatever charm I had

Of form and beauty, when the Greeks embarked .
For Ilium, and Ulysses went with them. 165
If he would but return with loving care
To watch about my life; aye then indeed
Greater and brighter would my honour be :
But now I am in misery; some god
Has many, many evils thrust on me: 170
For all the princes of these islands near,
Who in Dulichium and Samé rule,
And in Zacynthus with its wooded heights,
And those who dwell round sunny Ithaca,
Woo me, who loathe them, while they waste my goods :
And for this cause I pay but slight regard 176
To stranger-guests and suppliants; nor e'en
To heralds, who the people's craftsmen are;
Only for dear Ulysses yearns my heart !
And they urge on my marriage; I with craft 180
Hold them in play: but first of all some god
Raised in my mind the thought to place a loom
Within my chamber. I began to weave
A web both broad and fine, and said to them :
‘ Young princes, suitors mine, I you implore, 185

Though dead my husband be, that ye refrain
From urging on my nuptials, till this robe
I shall complete, (lest all the threads be wasted,)
Intended for Laertes' winding-sheet;
When death with its long sleep shall overtake 190
The aged hero: for the Grecian women
Would cast reproach on me, should he, so rich,
Lie like a pauper, shroudless in his grave.'

"Thus spake I, and they frankly acquiesced;
And day by day I worked the mighty loom, 195
But every night by torchlight I unwove
The work by day accomplished. Three years long
I thus deceived them: when the fourth was come
And glided on the hours, as months slipped by,
And very many days had passed away; 200
Then through my women's treachery—vile slaves,
And shameless ones!—they caught me unawares,
And me upbraided: thus perforce my task
Compelled I finished, sore against my will.
This marriage now I can no longer shun, 205
Nor find another plea to put them off;
My kindred urge me strongly too to wed;

My son is chafed to see his goods despoiled :
For now he has arrived at man's estate
And notes all this, and for his household cares ; 210
And honour may great Jove on him bestow !
But tell me now thy race ; from whence com'st thou ?
For well I ween thou dost not owe thy birth
To oak or rock, of which old legends tell."

Ulysses, fertile in resource, replied : 215

"O honoured consort of Laertes' son,
If still thou wilt persist to question me
About my kin, I needs must tell thee all ;
Though thus thou giv'st me o'er to greater woes
Than those which now surround me : this must be 220
His lot, who suffers bitter grief as I ;
Who for so long a time, afar from home,
So many cities strange has visited :
But I will tell thee, as thou askest me.

"The land of Crete amid the purple main 225
Lies fair, rich, girded by the waves ; wherein
Are ninety cities, and a countless folk ;
A various people, speaking various tongues :
With Greeks are Cretans pure, a haughty race ;

Cydonians; Dorians, with their waving crests; 230
And the Pelasgi, from Immortals sprung.
Midst these a famous city, Cnossus called,
There is, where Minos dwelt; who was their king
When nine years old; the friend of mighty Jove;
Deucalion's father; who my father was; 235
And me begot, and king Idomeneus.
He with his beak'd ships to Ilium,
Together with the Atreidian brothers, sailed:
I was his younger brother, Æthon called;
He was the elder and the mightier chief. 240
'Twas there in Crete that I Ulysses saw,
And there I gave him hospitality:
For thither him the furious tempest drave
When bound for Troy, and beat him from his course,
Rounding Maleia's cape: he brought his fleet 245
Into Amnisus, where the grotto stands
Of Eilithyia; in the harbour roads,
Hard to approach; and barely 'scaped the storms.
Then to our city straightway came the chief,
And for Idomeneus inquiry made, 250
Whom for a dear and honoured friend he claimed.

But the tenth day had dawned, or the eleventh,
Since he, Idomeneus, with all his fleet
Of beak'd galleys had made sail for Troy:
So to my palace I Ulysses brought, 255
And entertained him there right bounteously,
From all the plenteous store I had at home.
For him, and for his crews on board his ships,
I gathered from my people, and I gave
Meal, sparkling wine, and kine to sacrifice, 260
And slay and eat as much as they desired.
Twelve days the godlike Greeks remained with me ;
The northern tempest held them from their course,
Nor could we face the mighty blast on land ;
Surely some angry god awoke the storm : 265
But on the thirteenth day the wind was lulled,
The tempest fell, and they put out to sea."

Thus to his tale he gave the air of truth :
And as she heard his tale her tears burst forth,
And melted into tears her countenance. 270
As melts the snow upon the mountain tops,
The south wind melting what the west has strewed,
And, while it melts, the gushing brooks run full ;

So o'er her gentle cheeks course down her tears.

She mourns her husband sitting at her side : 275

He in his soul pities his weeping wife,

But holds his eyes unmoved within their orbs,

As were they senseless horn or steel; in craft

He buried kept his tears, and held them back.

When she had wept her fill, she spoke to him : 280

“Stranger, I fain would prove thy truthfulness :

If thou in very deed didst entertain,

As thou declarest, there within thy halls,

My husband, and his godlike comrades all ;

Tell me, what garments was he wearing then ? 285

What was he like himself ? and tell me too,

What were his comrades like who followed him ?”

Wary Ulysses answered in reply :

“O lady, it is hard to recollect

A thing so long ago; 'tis twenty years 290

Since thence he sailed, and left my native shore :

But as my memory sweeps o'er the past,

I tell thee how it brings him to my mind.

A purple mantle made of wool he wore,

Of double folds; the brooch which fastened it 295

Was worked in gold, fitted with double hasps :
In front the brooch was wrought with rare device ;
With his fore-paws and fangs, a dog held fast
A dappled, panting fawn : 'twas strange to see
How truthfully the beasts were wrought in gold,— 300
How the dog gazed, throttling the tender hart,
Which struggled with his feet to free himself.
A costly tunic also he had on,
I well remember, which beneath his cloak
Shone as the gleaming husk of the dried leek ; 305
So soft it was, and shining as the sun ;
Sooth many a dame cast longing looks at it !
And this I tell thee, fix it in thy mind :
Whether Ulysses wore these clothes from home,
I cannot say ; or whether on his voyage 310
One of his comrades gave them to the chief,
On board his galley, or some stranger friend :
For he indeed by many was beloved ;
Few were his peers among the Grecian chiefs.
• And I myself gave him a sword of bronze 315
And a rich purple robe with double folds,
Also a tunic reaching to his feet ;

And then with every honour sent him off
On board his high-decked ship to sail away.

A herald rather older than himself 320

Attended him; I can describe him now:

Bent were his shoulders, swart was he of hue,
Thick were his curly locks; and he was called
Eurybates: and him above the rest

Ulysses honoured; gentle was his mien." 325

Thus spake the chief: swept over her anew
The storm of grief, as she thus recognised
The proof unfailing which his story gave.
When she had wept her fill, she him addressed:

"Stranger, at first, before I heard thy tale, 330

I pitied thee; but now within my halls
Beloved and held in honour shalt thou be:

For I myself the garments gave to him
Which thou describest; I brought them myself

Smooth-folded from the wardrobe; sewed on them 335

Myself the shining brooch, him to adorn.

Him shall I never, never welcome back,

Returning to his home and native land.

Ah! woe the day on which Ulysses sailed,

Following his evil fate to Ilium, 340

That hateful Ilium of the hateful name!"

Wary Ulysses answered in reply:

"O honoured consort of Laertes' son,

Mar not thy lovely countenance with tears,

Nor vex thy soul with grieving for thy lord: 345

Not that I blame thee for thy grief: in sooth

She who has lost the husband of her youth,

To whom enwoven in his fond embrace

She has borne children, cannot choose but weep,

Whoe'er he be; much more shouldst thou bewail 350

Ulysses' loss,—a rival of the gods,

So men declare. But listen to my words,

And cease thy weeping: I will speak the truth,

Nor shroud in mystery how I have heard

That now Ulysses' home return is nigh; 355

That now he sojourns in the fruitful lands

Of the Thesprotians, alive and well;

And many treasures brings he here with him,

Which from the people there he has obtained.

But his beloved comrades he has lost, 360

Them and his ship, 'whelmed in the stormy sea,

As from Trinacria's isle he sailed away :
Jove and the Sun-god both were wroth with him,
For that his comrades slew the Sun-god's kine ;
Therefore they perished in the weltering deep : 365
Him, clinging to his galley's keel, the wave
Cast on the strand of the Phæacians' shore ;
A people kindred of the gods are they,
And as a god they revered the chief ;
And many gifts they gave to him, and fain 370
Would they have sent him safely to his home.
Thus long ago would he have there arrived,
But that it seemed to him a better plan,
As he was wandering over many a land,
Rich gifts to gather ; for in ready wit 375
No mortal man can with Ulysses vie,
None can contend with him in craft : so said
Pheido, the king of the Thesprotians ;
And swore to me myself that even then,
As in his palace he libations made, 380
The ship was launched, and ready was the crew,
To send him to his cherished native shore.
But me he sent away the first ; by hap

A ship of the Thesprotians was bound
Straight for Dulichium, the land of corn : 385
And all the riches which the chief had brought
He showed me lying there ; treasures enough
Ten generations to enrich, and more ;
Such was the wealth in the king's palace stored.
The chief, he said, had to Dodona gone, 390
That from its lofty-crested oak divine
He might the counsels learn of mighty Jove ;
If he, who had been absent now so long,
Should to his much-loved native land return
Without concealment, or arrive by stealth. 395
Therefore no doubt he is alive and well,
And soon will he be here ; nor longer stay
Still absent from his friends and native soil.
And now a mighty oath I swear to thee :
Bear witness, Jove, the chiefest and the first 400
Of all the gods ; bear witness too the hearth
Of good Ulysses, which I now approach,
That these things are at hand which I foretell :
Ulysses will be here within the year,
As this moon waneth, ere the next appear." 405

Then him the chaste Penelope addressed :

“O stranger, may thy words accomplished be!

Then shalt thou soon my kindly feelings learn,

And all who meet thee deem thee fortunate.

But ah! my mind forebodes how it will be: 410

Ulysses never, never will return,

Nor wilt thou gain an escort to thy home;

For in my home there are no masters now,

Such as with men Ulysses ever was:

Oh! was there ever such! to speed away 415

As well as to receive our honoured guests.

But now, ye maidens, wash this stranger's feet;

Strew cushions, robes, and blankets on his couch,

So that in genial warmth he wait the dawn:

And when the Dawn shines from her golden throne, 420

Early do ye attend him at the bath,

Anoint him also, so that he refreshed

May sit and take his meal within the hall

Close by Telemachus; and woe to him,

Of all those suitors mine, who vexes him, 425

Or treats him ill!—ill shall he speed in sooth,

However sorely angered he may be.

How wilt thou say, O stranger, I excel
In virtue and in understanding mind
All other women, if I leave thee here 430
Unkempt, ill clad, within my halls to feast?
Brief space have mortals here to earn good name:
He who is cruel, and does cruel deeds,
For him must all men wish a bitter end,
With bated breath while yet he lives; when dead, 435
With curses loud and deep they scoff at him:
But for the righteous man of righteous acts,
His honour far and wide the stranger vaunts
Amongst mankind; and many call him good."

Wily Ulysses answered in reply: 440

"O honoured consort of Laertes' son,
Blankets and robes, and cushions rich and fair,
To me a burthen are, since first I left
Crete's snow-clad mountains in my long-oared ship:
Fain would I lie as through the sleepless nights 445
I heretofore am wont; ay, many a night
Have I laid down upon a sorry couch,
And waited patiently the golden Dawn.
Nor would it grateful be to me to bare

My feet for washing : of thy handmaidens 450
Who serve thee here, not one shall touch my feet,
Except within thy palace walls there be
A very aged woman of known trust,
Who suffering has borne with steadfast soul,
Even as I : if such an one there be, 455
I would not grudge that she should wash my feet."

To him replied the chaste Penelope :

" Belovèd stranger, of the wanderers
Who from afar have hither come, not one
Has been so wise or dear to me as thou' ; 460
For all thy words thy wisdom plainly show.
Just such an aged woman of tried worth
Have I : 'twas she who nourished and brought up
Him, the unhappy one ; and in her hands
She held him when his mother brought him forth : 465
She, feeble as she is, shall wash thy feet.

" And so, my Euryclea, get thee up,
And wash his feet, the comrade of thy lord.
Alas ! perhaps Ulysses' hands and feet
Are e'en as his ; so furrowed and so worn : 470
For men who suffer misery, age fast !"

As thus she spoke, the aged handmaiden
With both her hands concealed her countenance,
Shedding warm tears, and spoke these woful words:
“ Ah, woe is me! skill-less to help my child! 475
In truth Jove hates thee more than other men,
Spite of thy godliness: no mortal man
So many sacrifices rich has burnt,
Nor offered choicest hecatombs as thou,
To Jove the Thunderer; praying to him 480
That he would grant thee a serene old age,
And life to rear the noble youth thy son.
And yet, ah me! I fear from thee alone
He sweeps away all hope of seeing home:
And thus mayhap, mid strangers far away, 485
In the fair palace of some mighty lord,
The serving women scoffed and jeered at him,
As all these hussies scoffed at thee, O guest.
Dreading the scorn and taunts of such as these,
Thou wilt not suffer them to wash thy feet; 490
But chaste Penelope, Icarius' child,
Has bid me, not unwilling, this to do:
And for her sake I fain would wash thy feet,

And for thine own ; my inmost soul is stirred
With grief for thee. But list the words I say : 495
Full many a wanderer has hither come,
In woe and wretchedness ; but 'mongst them all
I never yet saw one so like our chief,
In figure, voice, and form of feet, as thou."

Wily Ulysses answered in reply : 500

"O aged nurse, all who have seen us both
Speak thus, and say we are so much alike ;
As thou, thyself observing, hast remarked."

The aged woman took the shining bath
For washing feet, and water poured in it, 505
Cold in abundance, mixing warm therewith :
Ulysses drew his seat back from the hearth,
And quickly turned himself towards the dark,
Now fearing, when his nurse should handle him,
She could not fail to mark the well-known scar, 510
And his disguise be thus made manifest.

So she drew near to wash her master's feet :

She knew the scar at once, the cicatrice,

Where the boar ripped him with his gleaming tusk,

On Mount Parnassus with Autolycus, 515

His mother's noble father, and his sons ;
He who in craft and oath-sworn covenants
All men excelled : a god gave him this skill,
Hermes himself ; and to the god he burned
The thighs of rams and goats in sacrifice, 520
Who with his willing favour favoured him.

And when this same Autolycus arrived
At the rich soil of Ithaca, he found
The new-born boy of his own daughter there ;
And Euryclea placed upon his knees, 525
Just as he finished his repast, the babe,
On his arrival ; and thus spoke to him :

“Autolycus, now find a name to give
To this dear boy, the son of thine own child ;
In sooth he is the child of many prayers.” 530

Autolycus in answer thus replied :

“Thou son-in-law and daughter mine, I pray,
Name ye the child as now I tell ye both :
In wrath with many men and women too,
Upon the blooming earth I hither come ; 535
Therefore shall he be called a man of wrath,
Ulysses : and when grown a stalwart youth,

If thou wilt send him to his mother's home,
To my Parnassus, where mayhap may be
Treasures of mine; then with a gift from these, 540
Rejoicing, I will send him back to thee."

Therefore Ulysses went there afterwards
To earn the promised gifts: Autolycus
Himself received him, he and all his sons,
With kindly greeting, and with kindly words. 545

His grandam, Amphithèa, him embraced,
And kissed his head and both his beaming eyes:
And to his noble sons, Autolycus
Called out a banquet to prepare at once;
And they obeyed his urgent 'hest. An ox, 550

A five-year male, they drave in from the field;
The beast they slew, and flayed, and ready made,
And all divided into portions small;
Which pierced with spits they broiled with cunning skill:
The portions then they shared; and all the day, 555
Until the sun went down, they feasted there;
And naught was wanting to the genial feast.
But when the sun was set and darkness fell,
They laid them down, and took the gift of sleep.

And when the rosy-fingered Dawn appeared, 560
They all went forth to hunt, both dogs and men :
And with the chieftain's sons Ulysses went :
And they drew near Parnassus' lofty peak,
Wood-clothed ; and soon they reached its breezy dales,
Just as the Sun, new risen from the floor 565
Of Ocean's liquid depths, shot forth his beams
Upon the glebe. Into a deep ravine
The hunters came : before them went the dogs,
Tracking a scent ; the youths went after-them ;
But next the dogs Ulysses followed close, 570
Eagerly grasping his long-shafted spear.
A mighty boar lay in a tangled brake :
No blast mist-laden of the gusty winds
Could e'er search through its matted foliage,
Nor the bright Sun pierce through it with his beams, 575
Nor any shower through it penetrate,
So dense the thicket was ; and underneath
The fallen leaves lay thick upon the ground.
The crackling leaves, trod by the many feet
As all were pressing onwards, roused the boar ; 580
Which starting from his lair, with crest upraised

And blazing eyes, before them stood at bay.
Ulysses, keen to strike, rushed on the first,
Grasping his outstretched spear in his strong hand :
The boar, beforehand, with a sideward blow 585
With his sharp tusk tore down a strip of flesh
Above his knee, but failed to reach the bone :
Through the right shoulder then Ulysses smote him,—
The spear's bright point went through and through the
beast ;

Transfixed and moaning, in the dust he fell, 590
And gasping yielded up his breath and life.
Autolycus' dear sons pressed eager round,
And busied with the carcase of the boar,
While skilfully they bound the welling wound,
As with a charm they staunch'd the purple blood ; 595
And then brought back the noble godlike youth,
Ulysses, to their father's house again.
The chieftain and his sons, in leechcraft skilled,
Soon healed the wound ; and then with many gifts
They joyful sent him joying to his home, 600
With every loving care, to Ithaca.

His father and his lady mother both

Welcomed him home with joy; and of his wound
They straitly questioned, and he told them all:
How the boar smote him with his gleaming tusk, 605
As with the sons of lord Autolycus
He went a-hunting on Parnassus Mount.

The aged nurse, soon as she felt the scar,
Touching it with her hand, knew it at once;
And from her hands she straightway dropped his foot. 610
His leg fell back into the bath again,
Clattered the brazen vessel with the blow,
And tilted sideways, and the water spilt.
And she,—grief struggled for her soul with joy;
Her eyes were filled with tears, her voice was choked: 615
She touched Ulysses' chin and spoke to him:

“Thou art Ulysses, my beloved child;
Yea, thou art he: I knew thee not before,
Until I touched my master and my lord.”

She turned her eyes towards Penelope, 620
Yearning to say, Thy loved one now is here:
But she, Penelope, could nothing see,
Nor meet the nurse's gaze, nor understand;
For Pallas turned her mind to other things.

But by the throat Ulysses seized the nurse 625

With his right hand; and with his other hand

He dragged her towards him, and addressed her thus:

“Nurse, wouldst thou ruin me, whom thou hast held
Hanging upon thy bosom?—even now,

When in the twentieth year I gain at last, 630

After so many woes, my native soil?

But as thou hast my secret learnt in sooth,

Surely some god has put it in thy heart!

Be silent; lest some other learn the tale.

And now I tell thee what will surely be: 635

If thou keep not my counsel, even thee

I will not spare; although my nurse thou art,

When all the rest I slay within these halls.”

Wise Euryclea thus to him replied:

“My nursing, what a word has ’scaped thy lips! 640
Thou well shouldst know how steadfast and unmoved

My soul can be; now will I be as firm

As solid rock or iron. This I say,

And fix it in thy soul: if god vouchsafe

That thou the haughty suitors overthrow, 645

Then I will tell thee plainly who they are,

Among the women in thy palace halls,
Who thee dishonour and who guileless are."

Wily Ulysses answered in reply:

"Why shouldst thou tell me, nurse? No need for
this :

650

I for myself the conduct of each one
Will mark and scan ; do thou but hold thy peace,
And to the mighty gods commit the rest."

He spake ; the aged nurse-passed through the hall
To fetch more water, as the first was spilt : 655
When she had bathed him, and with shining oil
Had him anointed, nearer to the fire
Ulysses drew his chair to warm himself,
And shrouded in his rags the tell-tale scar ;
When thus Penelope began to speak : 660

"Stranger, I fain myself would question thee
A few words more ; the hour of rest is nigh,
When gentle sleep should visit even him
Who suffers grief : but as for me, the god
Immeasurable woe on me has cast ; 665
For I indulge my grief the livelong day,
And weep as I attend my daily tasks,

Or watch my maids at theirs within my house :
And when night comes, and should bring rest to all,
I restless lay me down upon my couch ; 670
And carking cares come thronging thick on me,
And with their pangs disquiet my full heart :
Even as the daughter of Pandareüs,
The songstress swart of hue, the nightingale,
In early springtide sits so sweetly singing 675
Among the leafy trees ; with her notes ringing,
She trills in changeful stops her throbbing song,
Weeping for her loved Itylus, her boy ;
Son of king Zethus, whom she slew herself,
Distraught with madness : so am I distraught, 680
And with distracting thoughts my soul is torn !
Whether I shall remain here with my boy,
And guard my all,—my household and my slaves,
My home, my palace with its stately roof,—
Still keeping faithful to my husband's bed, 685
And still obedient to the people's voice ;
Or whether I shall follow to his home
The noblest of the Grecian princes here,
Who woos me in these halls with richest gifts.

My son, while young and thoughtless, aye forbade 690
That I should wed, or leave my husband's house ;
But now that he is grown to man's estate,
He wishes me himself to quit these halls,
Vexed for his household and his household goods,
Which the young Grecian princes waste and spoil. 695

“Canst thou this dream for me unriddle? List!

Here twenty geese have I about my house,
Who feed on barley-grain in water steeped ;
A pleasure 'tis to me to look on them :
A mighty eagle, with his cruel beak, 700
Came swooping from the mountain on my birds ;
He broke the necks of all, and slew them there,
And left them piled in heaps about the hall,
And then he soared aloft towards the sky.
I wept and wailed, although 'twas but a dream ; 705
My fair-haired Grecian women round me came,
Lamenting that the eagle slew my geese.
The eagle stooped again, and lighted down
Upon a beam projecting from the roof,
And with a human voice addressed me thus : 710

‘O daughter of renowned Icarus,

Be comforted ; not a mere dream is this,
But something real and good, to come to pass.
These geese thy suitors are ; I, who before
Was but a bird—an eagle—now indeed 715
Thy very husband am : I will inflict
A direful vengeance on thy suitors all.
He spoke, and sleep was lifted from my eyes ;
I looked about, and saw my geese were there,
And tranquilly they cropped, as they were wont, 720
The grains of barley from their feeding trough.”

Wily Ulysses answered in reply :

“O lady, no One can explain thy dream
Other than this : Ulysses has himself
Declared to thee how all will come to pass ; 725
Destruction hangs over the suitors all ;
Not one of them shall 'scape from death and doom.”

The chaste Penelope addressed him thus :

“Stranger, of dreams some meaningless there are,
Of some the meaning difficult to tell ; 730
Nor are all things fulfilled which they forecast.
Two gates there are which ope to fleeting dreams ;
Of horn the one, the other ivory :

The dreams which pass through sculptured ivory,
Cheat with vain hopes, and speak but idle words; 735
But those which pass the gate of polished horn,
If any mortal may such vision see,
Are certain of fulfilment. But I ween
Through no such portal came that wretched dream
To visit me; right welcome would such be 740
To me and to my son. And this besides
I tell thee now, and fix it in thy mind:
The dawn is coming now, the hateful dawn
Which from Ulysses' home will sever me:
Since for a contest, I will now prepare 745
Those axes twelve, which he was wont to place
All of them in a row in his own hall,—
As for a building ship, the yaken chocks
Are all aligned to bear the vessel's keel,—
Then, standing from afar, he used to shoot 750
With skill his arrow through the axes' loops.
And to the suitors I will now propose
This feat of skill; myself to be the prize.
Whoso with greatest ease can string the bow,
And shoot the arrow through the axes' helms, 755

Him will I follow: I will tear myself
Away from this, my happy wedded home ;
So fair, so sweet, so rich ; and which henceforth
I can but think of as a bygone dream."

Wary Ulysses answered in reply : 760

" O honoured consort of Laertes' son,
Do thou delay no longer to propose
This contest in thy halls: ere it take place,
Ready Ulysses will be here himself ;
Ere these can handle the well-polished bow 765
And string it, or shoot through the iron helves."

Then him the chaste Penelope addressed :

" Stranger, if thou were willing in these halls
Still here to sit, and still with thy discourse
Me to delight, no sleep would visit me : 770
But mortals must not sleepless aye remain ;
On each of us the Immortals have imposed
A time for all things on this bounteous earth :
So now my upper chamber I must seek,
And lay me on my couch of misery, 775
Which ever now is watered by my tears ;
Since my Ulysses sailed for Ilium,

That hateful Ilium of the hateful name!

There will I lay me down: and in my house

Do thou lie down thyself; or on the floor, 780

Or where my maidens now have made thy bed."

Her stately upper chamber then she sought,

Even as she spake, nor unattended she;

Her other serving-maidens followed her:

When to the chamber with her handmaidens 785

She came, her loved Ulysses she bewailed,

Her cherished husband; until slumber sweet

The blue-eyed goddess on her eyelids cast.

BOOK XX.

ARGUMENT.

The shadow of the doom—Prophecy of Theoclymenus.

DAYS 41-42.

ULYSSES then within the corridor

Lay down to rest; but first upon the floor

He stretched an untanned ox-hide, and thereon

He piled up many fleeces of the sheep,

Which the young princes for their feasts had slain. 5

Eurynomé cast over him a robe,

And there Ulysses lay; but lay awake,

On vengeance brooding in his inmost heart

Against the suitors: from the palace hall

The women stole, the suitors' paramours, 10

Exchanging jests and laughter as they went.

His heart was deeply stirred within his breast,

Conflicting thoughts surged through his tossed soul:
Whether he should upon these harlots rush,
And slay them then and there; or let them go 15
To meet their haughty paramours once more,
For this last time: his heart within him pants.
As the she-dog around her tender whelps
Stalks howling at the stranger who draws near,
Ready to fly at him; e'en so with him, 20
His spirit cries within, and howls with rage,
Angered at their vile deeds: he smote his breast,
And with this speech rebuked his eager heart:

“Be still, my heart; bear this as thou hast borne
A greater infamy than even this; 25
That day on which the furious Cyclops ate
Thy gallant comrades: this thou didst endure,
So that thy patient foresight rescued thee,
When like to perish in that fearful cave.”

He chided thus his heart within his breast, 30
And into stern endurance it was stilled.
But he kept tossing on his restless couch:
As one who longs to cook with all dispatch
A sausage full of flavour and of juice,

Upon the glowing coals of the bright fire,— 35
He tosses it about, now here, now there,—
So is he tossed about in anxious thought,
Now here, now there. Shall he lift up his hands
Against that shameless crew; and he alone
Against such odds? Pallas herself drew near, 40
From heaven descending; at his head she stood,
And in a woman's form thus spoke to him:

“Thou most unhappy! wherefore watchest thou?
This is thy palace; and in this thy home
Thy wife is here e'en now; thy son as well, 45
And such a son as all might wish to claim.”

Wary Ulysses answered in reply:

“Yea, goddess, all thou say'st is true indeed;
But now my thoughts are doubting in my mind,
How on these shameless ones I may lay hands. 50
Alone I am, they many in my halls:
On this besides I have a graver doubt
If by the favour of thyself and Jov
I slay them all, how shall I afterwards
From their avengers 'scape? Pray tell me this.” 55

The blue-eyed goddess thus to him replied:

“O thou of little faith! how many a one
Trusts to a comrade weaker far than I,
Who lacks my wisdom, and but mortal is:
I am a goddess, and thy faithful guard 60
In all thy toils. I tell thee plainly this:
If fifty bands of men of diverse tongues
Stood round us, eager in the lust of fight
To slay us, thou shouldst overcome them all,
And drive their cattle and their goodly sheep. 65
Sleep now, and rest; to watch the livelong night
Is grievous: soon thy troubles will be o’er.”

She spake, and sleep upon his eyelids strewed;
The lovely goddess then Olympus sought.

When sleep, which stills the anguish of the soul 70
And rests the weary limbs, had mastered him,
His spouse of constant soul was waking still;
She sat and wept upon her downy couch;
And when the lovely dame had wept her fill,
She first of all to Artemis thus prayed: 75

“Daughter of Jove, dread goddess, Artemis;
Wouldst thou but launch thine arrow through my
heart,

And slay me now at once! or that the storm
Would whirl me now away in its wild breath
Down to the darksome paths, and leave me stretched 80
Upon the bank of Ocean's eddying tide!
As thus of yore the tempests whirled away
The virgin daughters of Pandareüs:
The gods destroyed their parents; they were left
Orphaned in their own halls; and Aphrodite 85
Fed them with butter, honey, and rich wine;
While Juno beauty gave to them, and wit
Excelling women all; and Artemis,
The spotless goddess, gave them grace of limb;
Minerva taught them skill in workmanship. 90
But when the lovely goddess Aphrodite
Ascended high Olympus, there to ask
Of Jove the Thunderer to grant to them
The genial bliss of wedlock, crown of joy:
(For he knows all things; what to mortal men 95
Kind Fate should grant, or kinder Fate refuse;)
For answer to her prayers, the Harpies seized
The virgins in their grasp, and gave them o'er
To the dread Furies' awful ministry.

"Would that the dweller in Olympus thus 100

Would sweep me into nothingness ; or she,

The fair-haired Artemis, would smite me down !

So with the vision yet before my eyes

Of my Ulysses I might pass away,

And reach the bourn of that sad land below : 105

Nor live to gladden with my beauty's charm

The senses of a meaner man than he.

A sorrow can be borne by one who weeps,

E'en through the livelong day, with aching heart,

If but at night sleep lull the sufferer : 110

For when Sleep veils the eyes, he brings with him

Forgetfulness of all—of good and ill ;

But me the god haunts then with evil dreams !

For on this very night, one like to him

Methought lay by my side—such as he was 115

When with the army he went forth to war ;

And my sad heart rejoiced ; it seemed to me

This was no vision, but reality."

She spake ; the Dawn shone from her golden throne.

Ulysses heard the voice of her who wept, 120

And to his half-waked senses it appeared

As if she knew him, and above his head
Were standing near him now: he straight arose;
The fleeces, and the robe on which he slept,
He laid upon a chair within the hall, 125
And bore the ox-hide out of doors away:

Then, stretching forth his hands, to Jove he prayed:

“O Father Jove, if of your gracious will
Ye gods have hither guided me at last,
O'er land and sea, to this my native shore, 130
After the many ills ye thrust on me;
Show me some sign of favour here within,
Some word of those awake within the halls;
And show without some portent in the sky.”

Thus spake he, praying: Jove the Counsellor 135
Heard him from his high dwelling in the clouds,
And straightway from serene Olympus flashed
His levin bolt; the godlike chief rejoiced:
And then a woman slave who ground the corn
Uttered these words of omen, nigh at hand, 140
From the near dwelling where the hand-mills stood,
Belonging to the shepherd of the folk:
There at the mills twelve women ever toiled

To furnish barley-meal and flour of wheat,
The pith of manhood: while the others slept,— 145
Since they had ground their daily task of meal,—
This one, who was the feeblest of them all,
Still ceased not from the labour of her task;
She stopped her grinding for a moment's space,
And spake these words, an omen to the King: 150

“O Father Jove, who rulest gods and men,
Thou from the starry heaven without a cloud
Hast launched thy thunder; this to one of us
Must surely be thy sign: Oh hear the prayer
Which I in misery address to thee! 155

Grant that the suitors on this very day
May take their last and closing feast of joy,
Here in Ulysses' halls; oh grant that they
Who have worn out my limbs with bitter toil,
In grinding barley-meal for their repasts, 160
May swallow their last morsel here to-day!”

Thus spake she, and the chief rejoiced to hear
These words of omen, and Jove's thunder voice,
Which boded vengeance on the guilty ones.

The other serving-maidens gathered now 165

Meanwhile within Ulysses' palace fair :

And first they kindled on the hearth the fire,

Which never wearies in its toil for man.

And from his couch Telemachus arose,

And like a god he seemed ; his robes he donned 170

And o'er his shoulders slung his keen-edged sword,

And bound his sandals on his shapely feet,

Took too his trusty lance with brazen head ;

Then forth he went and at his threshold stood,

And thus to Euryclea spoke and said : 175

“Dear nurse, have ye done honour to my guest,

Here in my home, with bed and plenteous board,

Or was he left neglected here to lie ?

For even so my mother ever is,

With all her wisdom : oft in her caprice 180

One stranger she will honour, though he be

Of little worth ; while a far better man

She drives away with insult from her doors.”

The prudent Euryclea thus replied :

“Oh blame her not, dear boy, who blameless is ; 185

For he sat at his ease, and quaffed his wine

As much as he desired ; and said himself

That bread he lacked not, for she questioned him :

And at the hour of rest she told the maids

A couch with blankets to prepare for him ; 190

But he, as one to toil and hardship wont,

Refused to lay on couch or blankets soft,

But in the corridor he needs must lie

On untanned hide, and fleeces of the sheep :

But we ourselves threw over him a robe." 195

She spoke ; Telemachus strode through the hall,

His spear in hand, two fleet hounds at his heels ;

He went to council with the armèd Greeks ;

While Euryclea of the women chief,

Daughter of Ops, who was Pisenor's son, 200

Her orders to the serving-women gave :

" Up, maids, in haste, and sweep the palace hall

And sprinkle it, and on the sculptured chairs

Hang purple tapestry ; and the tables all

With sponges wipe, and wash the goblets clean, 205

And double chalices, wrought skilfully :

And some of ye go quickly to the spring,

To fetch fresh water, and return in haste.

Ere long the suitors will be in the hall,

For very early will they come to-day : 210

It is a solemn festival for all."

She spake : they heard her, and obeyed with zeal,
And twenty of them went at once to fetch
The water from the shaded spring ; the rest
Were busily employed about the house. 215

Then came the servants of the Grecian lords,
Who cleft the wood for fuel skilfully.
Meanwhile the women from the spring returned ;
And then the swineherd came, and brought with him
Three fatted boars, the best of all the herd ; 220
And these he left to feed within the courts,
And to Ulysses spoke these kindly words :

" Say, stranger, do the Grecian princes now
Regard thee with more favour in these halls,
Or do they scorn thee as they did before ? " 225

Crafty Ulysses answered in reply :
" Eumæus, may the gods avenge the wrong
Which these disdainful men contrive with guile !
Yea, in another's palace, not their own :
No shred of honour or respect have they." 230

As thus with one another they conversed,

Melanthius, the goatherd, them approached :

He brought the choicest she-goats in the herds
To feast the suitors, and with him there came
Two other herdsmen ; and the goats he tethered, 235
And left them in the echoing corridor ;
When thus Ulysses he with gibes addressed :

“ Stranger, wilt thou persist in vexing us,
E'en now, with thy unwelcome presence here,
Begging about the palace still for alms 240
From every one ? Wilt thou not find the door ?
We shall not well be rid of thee, I ween,
Except thou taste our fists ; since thou wilt beg
In this unseemly fashion : get thee hence ;
Elsewhere in Greece thou mayst find other feasts.” 245

He spoke ; Ulysses deigned not to reply,
But shook his head in silence, brooding ill.

And next and third, Philœtius approached,
A chief of men ; he for the suitors brought
A barren steer, and fatted goats with him ; 250
From the mainland the boatmen these conveyed,
Who pilots are, and ferry o'er the strait
All men as well, who chance to reach their shores :

The beasts he tethered safely 'neath the porch,
And, drawing near the swineherd, questioned him : 255

“Swineherd, who is this stranger just arrived
At this our master's house? Say from what men
Boasts he his lineage? where does he claim
His kindred race, and where his fatherland?
Wretched he seems; but his majestic mien 260
Is something noble, kingly: ah! the gods
The beauty mar of wretched wanderers,
Nobles or kings be they; whene'er for them
They spin the fated web of misery.”

And, drawing near to him, with his right hand 265
He welcomed him, and spoke these winged words:

“Hail, reverend stranger! happy mayst thou be
Henceforth, though now beset with many ills!
O Father Jove, most merciless of gods,
Thou dost not pity men of noble rank, 270
Though sprung from thine own race; nor dost thou spare
To fellow them with ill, and bitter griefs!
My heart was burning when I him beheld;
My eyes o'erflowed: for then I thought of him,
My chief, Ulysses; it may be that he 275

May now be wandering thus among strange men,
In sorry garments clad—such rags as these—
If yet he live and see the light of day.
But ah! if he be dead and have descended
To the sad realms of Hades! Woe is me 280
For my Ulysses then, my noble chief!
Who placed me as a herdsman of the kine,
When I among the Cephallenian folk
Was but a stripling then; beneath my care
The kine have teemed, and grown to numbers vast; 285
In no wise could the kine of mortal man,
With broad and stately brows, have thriven more:
These, strangers now compel me to drive hither,
For them to slay and eat; they little care
For him who is his son, and heritor 290
Of these broad lands; nor do they hold in awe
The vengeance of the gods: and now they lust
To share among them all the goods and wealth
Of my long-absent master and my lord.
But now on this my thoughts within my breast 295
Are ever turning: 'twould be ill of me,
While his son lives, that I should flee away

With all his cattle to a foreign land
And foreign masters; but 'tis worse, methinks,
Here to remain and guard his flock of kine 300
For others' use: this is a grief to me.
And but for this I long ago had fled,
And to another lord betaken me,
Some prince of might pre-eminent: for here
Is naught beside intolerable wrong. 305
But still I cannot choose but think of him,
The wretched one: if he would only come,
And make a clearance of this rabble rout!"

Crafty Ulysses answered in reply:

"Herdsmen, it seems thou art not ill-disposed, 310
Nor dost thou want for sense; I see myself
That understanding dwells within thy soul;
Therefore I tell thee, and confirm my words
With a most solemn oath, which now I swear,—
Bear witness, Jove, the chiefest of the gods, 315
This hospitable table, and the hearth
Of good Ulysses, which I now approach,—
That while thou still art here, the chief himself
Will to his home return: with thine own eyes

Thyself shall see, if so thou really wish, 320
The suitors slain, who lord it in these halls."

In answer thus to him the herdsman spoke:

"Stranger, may Saturn's son accomplish this!
Then shouldst thou see how much my might is worth,
And how my deeds would follow up my words." 325

And so Eumæus prayed to all the gods,
That the great chief might to his home return.

So thus with one another they conversed.
Meanwhile the suitors death and mortal doom
Were plotting for Telemachus; when swooped 330
A bird sinister, right amidst the band,
A towering eagle; in his claws a dove;
When thus Amphinomus addressed them all:

"Stay, friends; our counsels run not to their end,
With even course; just now is not the time 335
To slay the prince: so turn we to our feast."

Thus spoke Amphinomus, and they approved;
And as they came within Ulysses' hall,
Their mantles straight they doffed, and laid them down
Upon the couches and the chairs of state: 340
And lusty sheep and well-fed goats they slew,

Swine fatlings, and a heifer from the fold:

The inner parts they cooked and handed round;

And in the bowls the wine they duly mixed.

The swineherd handed round the cups to each; 345

The bread, in baskets fair, Philœtius

Laid out; Melanthius poured out the wine:

They on the viands laid their ready hands.

Telemachus, with wily artifice,

Seated Ulysses in the stately hall 350

Close by the stony threshold, and for him

He placed a lowly seat and table mean;

The choicest morsels laid upon his plate,

And in a golden cup poured out his wine;

And him moreover with these words addressed: 355

“Sit here, and quaff thy wine among the chiefs,

And I myself will be thy sure defence

Against the suitors’ violence and gibes;

For this is not an open house to all,

But was Ulysses’ palace; I his heir: 360

And, princely suitors, turn your thoughts aside

From words of scorn or deeds of violence,

Lest strife and discord in our feast arise.”

Thus spake Telemachus ; they bit their lips,
And gazed with wonder at the daring youth 365
Who thus had spoken ; when Eupeithes' son,
Antinous, addressed them with these words :

“Princes, this speech of young Telemachus
Let us accept in peace, though hard it be :
His words are menacing, in sooth, to us. 370
For Saturn's son has hindered our intent ;
Else had we silenced him in his own halls,
Though in so high a strain he wags his tongue.”

He spoke ; the youth regarded not his words :
And then the heralds through the city led 375
The holy hecatomb ; the Grecian chiefs,
Their long hair waving round their brows, all met,
In the dread shadow of Apollo's grove,
The god who hurls his arrows from afar.

When they the outer slices had prepared, 380
They served them, and commenced the stately feast :
And they who tended, placed an equal share
Before Ulysses, as it fell by lot :
These were the orders of Telemachus,
The son beloved of the godlike chief. 385

E'en now Minerva would not yet allow
The haughty suitors to restrain themselves
From grievous outrage; so that angry grief
Should sink more deeply in Ulysses' soul.
Amongst the band of suitors was a prince 390
Whose thoughts were ever bent on lawlessness;
His name Ctesippus; he in Samé dwelt:
This youth, relying on his boundless wealth,
Courtèd the spouse of the long-absent one;
And he the haughty suitors now addressed: 395

“O noble suitors, listen while I speak:
Already has the stranger-guest received
An equal portion, as is meet and right;
It is not just, nor is it generous,
That stranger-guests of young Telemachus 400
Should be deprived of what is due to them,
When they his palace visit. I am fain,
E'en I, to give an offering to his guest,
Which he himself may to the slave present
Who brought him water for his bath; or else 405
To any other of the servitors,
Within the palace of the godlike chief.”

With that he seized an ox's foot which near
Lay in a basket, and with stalwart hand
He hurled it at the chief; who shunned the blow, 410
Stooping a little, as he grimly smiled;
Boding no good to him, who only smote
The polished wall; when thus Telemachus
Sharply rebuked Ctesippus with these words:

“Ctesippus, it is fortunate for thee 415
That thou didst miss the guest, who shunned thy blow;
Or I had surely run thee through and through
With my sharp spear myself: and then in sooth
No wedding would thy father solemnize
For thee at home; instead, thy burial here. 420
Let no one venture on unseemly acts
Here in my palace: now I have the sense
To heed and mark these things, the good and bad;
Before I was a child. With patience yet
We have to witness all these shameful things; 425
My sheep are slaughtered, and my wine is quaffed,
My bread is wasted: hard it is indeed
For one alone so many to restrain.
But now, injurious princes, work no more

Your evil will and evil deeds on me ; 430
For if ye now would slay me with your swords,
Far rather this ; far better it would be
To die, than witness these outrageous acts :
The stranger and the guest contemned and scorned ;
The women and attendants dragged about, 435
In hideous fashion, in my stately halls."

He spake, and they were silent,—hushed were all :
Till Agelaus spoke, Damastor's son.

After a pause, he thus took up the word :

" O friends, let none of us with bickering words 440
Give answer to a speech so justly spoken,
Nor treat with contumely the stranger-guest,
Nor any of the servants of the house.
And I would fain address a kindly word
Both to Telemachus and to the Queen ; 445
If they with kindly heart would list my words.
As long as ye had hope within your breasts
That wise Ulysses ever would return,
There was no blame to you that ye restrained
And held us suitors back from all our hopes, 450
Here in your palace : it were better far

Ulysses had returned, and reached his home ;
But now 'tis plain he never will return.
Go therefore to thy mother ; tell her now
She must a husband take,—the one of us 455
Whom she may deem the noblest and the best,
And him who offers her the richest gifts :
And then thou mayst enjoy thy heritage,
And eat and drink in peace ; while she, the Queen,
Thy mother, may another's household rule." 460

Telemachus, the prudent youth, replied :

"Nay, Agelaus, by the great god Jove,
And by my father's woes, who on some strand
Afar from Ithaca has met his doom,
Or wanders hopelessly, I have no will 465
In aught my mother's marriage to delay :
Nay, rather do I urge her on to wed
With whom she will : I offer gifts beside.
But I am loth to thrust her from my halls
Against her wish, with peremptory words : 470
Nay, god forbid that I do such a deed !"

Thus spake the prince, when midst the suitors all
Pallas Minerva frantic laughter stirred ;

With palsy struck their senses. As they laughed,
Their laughter echoed strangely from their lips; 475
The meat they ate was blood-stained; and their
eyes

Were filled with causeless tears: their boding soul
Was ready to burst forth in wails of grief;
When godlike Theoclymenus thus spoke:

“Woe—woe, ye hapless ones! what dismal doom 480
Is this which ye must suffer? In dark night
Your heads, your countenances, and your forms
Down to your knees are shrouded; dismal wails
Burst forth; your cheeks are dabbled o’er with tears;
With gore these walls and fair arcades are smeared; 485
The corridor is full of awful shapes,—
The court is full of them, all drifting down
To Erebus, down to the nether gloom;
The sun has vanished from the firmament,
A baleful mist is sweeping o’er its orb.” 490

He spake, but they all lightly laughed at him;
And thus Eurymachus began to speak:

“Our guest is crazed, the stranger just arrived:
So quick, ye youths, conduct him out of doors,

And lead him safely to the council place; 495
Since all things here seem dark as night to him."

And Theoclymenus to him replied:

"Eurymachus, I lack no guide of thee,
For I have eyes and ears, and feet as well;
And reason sways my breast, no skill-less guide; 500
And these will lead me hence, and through the doors.
I see the doom now hanging over you,
From which not one of you can 'scape or flee,
Ye suitors; heaping scorn on other men,
And in the palace of the godlike chief 505
For ever plotting schemes of villany."

As thus he spake, he left the well-thronged halls,
And to the chief Piræus took his way,
And he received him kindly as his guest.

The suitors at each other looked and laughed, 510
And jeered Telemachus about his guests;
And one of these disdainful youths thus spoke:

"Telemachus, no mortal man can be
As luckless in his choice of guests as thou:
Thou hast for one a begging vagabond,— 515
This fellow, ever craving food and wine,

Who has no skill for work in peace or war,
A burthen to the soil, and nothing else;
And now this other comes and prophesies.
Be swayed by me—'twill better be for thee: 520
Let us ship off these precious guests of thine
To the Sicilians, and sell them there;
Thus thou mayst get some profit from the pair."

They spoke: he to their words gave little heed,
But silent on his father fixed his eyes; 525
Still waiting for the signal he should give
To lay his hands upon that shameless crew.

And chaste Penelope, Icarius' child,
Her sculptured chair placed opposite the door,
Whence she could hear the words of every one 530
Who spake within the hall. With laughter loud,
They held their festive joyous revelry;
For many beasts they slew and sacrificed.
But never was there grimmer feast than this,
Which soon the goddess and the dauntless chief 535
Were to spread out before them,—for these men,
Who now so long had schemed their villany.

BOOK XXI.

ARGUMENT.

The trial of the bow.

DAY 42.

THEN blue-eyed Pallas wrought upon the mind
Of chaste Penelope, Icarus' child,
To lay the bow and axes of grey steel
Before the suitors in Ulysses' hall;
The arms for strife, and harbinger of doom. 5
And up the palace lofty stairs she went
Ascending; bearing in her shapely hand
The brazen key, beauteous, and deftly curved:
The handle of the key was ivory.
And with her serving-maids the inner room 10
She sought, where lay the treasures of the King;
Gold, bronze, and iron worked with patient skill:

And there was lying the recurv'd bow,
And there the quiver in its hollow held
Arrows in number, fledged with groans of death: 15
These Iphitus, the son of Eurytus,
Peer of the immortal gods, gave to the chief,
When they in Lacedæmon chanced to meet;
For in Messenê they together came,
There in the palace of Ortilochus. 20
Thither Ulysses came about a debt
Due to him from the people of the land;
For the Messenians had made a raid
On Ithaca, and in their oary ships
Had carried off with them three hundred sheep, 25
Their shepherds with them: on an embassy
Ulysses came for these—a toilsome voyage—
While yet a youth; him on this mission sent
His father and the other aged chiefs.
And Iphitus moreover thither came, 30
In search of horses he had lost of his,
Twelve mares; with them their foals, laborious mules:
These very mares brought death and doom on him;
For next he visited the son of Jove,

The hero Hercules, of dauntless heart, 35
Practised in dreadful deeds; who slew the chief,
Although he was a guest in his own house;
The ruthless one! nor did he reverence
The god's all-seeing eye, nor his own board,
Whereat he gave him hospitality: 40
He slew him even then, and in his halls
He kept his steeds whose strong hoofs spurned the
earth.

And Iphitus the chief Ulysses met,
When seeking for the mares, and gave to him
The bow which mighty Eurytus once bore, 45
Who, when he in his lofty palace died,
To his son left the bow; and in return
Ulysses gave to him a keen-edged sword
And trusty lance,—firstfruit of friendship kind.
But at the festive board they never met, 50
For erst the son of Jove slew Iphitus,
The son of Eurytus, the Immortals' peer,
Who to Ulysses gave the bow: the chief,
Sailing in his black galleys to the war,
Took not the bow with him, but left it lying 55

Within his palace halls,—a memory
Of his true friend ; and only carried it,
And used it in his native land at home.

When to the inner room the lovely dame
Arrived, she o'er the oaken threshold passed, 60
Which long ago the workman with deft skill
Had wrought and carved, and with a plumbline
squared ;

With doorposts fitted, and had hung on them
The doors, which shone with glittering ornament :
And quickly from the ring she loosed the thong, 65
Thrust in the key, and pointing carefully
Shot back the bolts which held the shining doors ;
They on their hinges groaned : as lows the bull
When feeding in the meadow, so resounded
The shining valves when, yielding to the key 70
And her behest, they swiftly open flew.

And she drew near the lofty shelf where stood
The chests wherein her perfumed garments lay ;
From thence with outstretched arm she from the pin
Took down the bow ; it lay within its case, 75
Which with its gleaming colours wrapped it round.

She sat her down, and on her gentle knees
She laid it; weeping bitterly the while,
As from its case she drew her loved one's bow.

When she had wept her fill, she rose and sought 80
The hall wherein the haughty suitors were;
And in her hands she held the curvèd bow
And quiver, which within its hollow held
Arrows in numbers, barbed with groans of woe:
And in attendance her handmaidens came, 85
And bore with them a casket; which contained
Much steel and bronze, the weapons of her lord.
And when the lovely lady now drew near
The suitors, and the threshold of the hall,
Carved with consummate workmanship, she paused, 90
And o'er her cheeks let down the gauze-like veil;
On either side of her a maiden stood,
Of modest mien; and thus she them addressed:

“Hearken to me, ye noble suitors mine,
Who in the lengthened absence of my lord 95
Have made yourselves at home, to eat and drink
Persistently within my palace here;
For this no other pretext can ye urge

Except that ye are willing, one and all,
To win me and to wed me for your spouse. 100
Now, princes, prove your faith; lo! now is here
A contest to decide your rivalry.
Before you now I lay the mighty bow
Of my Ulysses, of the godlike chief:
Whoso with greatest ease can string the bow 105
With his strong hands, and through the axes' helms
Through all of them, the twelve, can send his shaft,
Him will I follow: I will tear myself
Away from this my happy wedded home;
So fair, so sweet, so rich; and which henceforth 110
I can but think of as a bygone dream."

She spake, and to the swineherd gave command
To lay the bow and axes of grey steel
Before the suitors: and Eumæus wept
When he received the bow and laid it there; 115
And on the other side the herdsman wept,
When he beheld the bow of his dear lord.
Antinous upbraided them and said:

"Ye senseless churls, who think but of to-day,
Woe to ye, cravens! wherefore do ye weep, 120

And thus awake within our lady's breast
The soul of sadness? Bound with many woes
Now lies her soul, without your vexing her,
Since she has lost the husband of her love.
But sit ye silent at our banquet here, 125
Or, if ye needs must wail, go out of doors;
And for us princes leave the bow behind,
A contest arduous: for well I ween
It will not easy be to bend that bow.
No man is there among us princes all 130
Such as Ulysses was: I saw him once;
Though then a child, I still remember him."

He spake; but in his inmost heart he hoped
To string the bow, and shoot the arrow through
The axes' rings: he who was destined first 135
To taste the bitter arrow from the hands
Of the great chief, whom he dishonoured then,
Sitting within his halls; and who, withal,
Stirred up his comrades to dishonour him.

Telemachus in pride of strength then spoke: 140

"Ye gods! great Jove, son of the Ancient
One,

Has robbed me of my wits. My mother dear,
So prudent heretofore, has promised now
Another lord to follow; from her home,
This home of ours, to tear herself away: 145
Yet I am glad, and in my folly laugh!
But, princes, now decide your rivalry:
Here are the weapons now before your eyes;
Here is a lady who hath not her peer
In all the land of Greece; no, not in Argos, 150
Mycenæ, nor the holy Pylian soil,
Nor yet in this our Ithaca itself,
Nor if ye search the fruitful continent.
But this ye know yourselves; no need for me
To boast my mother's charms. Now no delay, 155
Nor with excuses hold yourselves aloof,
But let us see the trial of the bow;
And I myself will in the contest join:
And if I shall succeed and string the bow,
And shoot my arrow through the axes' rings, 160
My lady mother will not then desert
Me in my wretchedness; nor this our home,
Following another lord: nor I be left

Lonely behind; if I have strength and skill
My father's glorious weapons now to wield." 165

Then he sprang up, and from his shoulders cast
His purple cloak, and laid his sharp sword down :
And first he ranged the axes in a row,
Digging a trench for them along the floor,
All of one level ; and he them aligned 170
With plumbline, stamping down the earth around ;
And wonder seized them all when they beheld
How skilfully the axes thus he placed,
Who never had cast eyes on them before.

Then to the threshold of the hall he went 175
To try the bow : and thrice he made it give
And tremble, straining with his utmost force ;
Thrice he relaxed his efforts, hoping still
To string the bow and shoot through all the helves ;
And the fourth time he strove with mighty force, 180
And would have strung it : but Ulysses turned
And shook his head, and thus restrained the youth,
Spite of his eagerness. Telemachus

In pride of strength then spoke to them, and said :

"Lo now ! shall I be weak and good for naught 185

Ever henceforth? or am I still too young,
And ne'er as yet have proved my strength of arm,
To guard me from the foe who me assails?
But ye, who may be mightier than I,
Step forth, and make ye trial of the bow; 190
And carry out the contest to the end."

He spoke, and laid the bow upon the ground,
Leaning it on the strong and polished doors;
And also there he left the winged shaft,
And on the curved bow end he rested it, 195
And then drew back again; and on the chair
From which he had arisen sat him down.

Then spake Antinous, Eupheithes' son:

"Now, comrades, from the right in order due
Haste forward, ye beginning from the place 200
Where the cup-bearer serves the wine for us."

Thus spake Antinous, and they approved.

Leiodes, son of CEnops, first arose;
A seer he was, who offered sacrifice,
And by the beauteous wine-bowl went to sit 205
In the far corner of the hall; to him,
And him alone, the suitors' wicked acts

Were hateful; often he rebuked them all:

And he first took the bow and feathered shaft,

As to the threshold of the hall he went, 210

The first of them to try and string the bow.

He could not string it; in his vain attempt

He strained his delicate and skill-less hands;

And, turning to the suitors, thus he spoke:

“Alack! dear friends, I cannot string the bow; 215

Yea, let another take it if he will:

This bow, I trow, will many princes rive

Of soul and life: better by far to die

Than still to live, and fail in the emprise

For which we here are gathered; for which all 220

From day to day have tarried waiting here.

Now many a one still hopes with longing soul,

Still yearns to win and wed Ulysses' spouse;

But when he tries the bow and failure learns,

Then let him court, and sue with many gifts, 225

Another of the fair-robed Grecian dames.

But let the Queen accept the prince who gives

The richest gifts, and whom the Fates may will.”

He spake, and laid the bow upon the ground,

Leaning one end against the polished doors ; 230
And there he also left the feathered shaft,
And on the fair bow end he rested it ;
And then drew back again, and on the chair
From which he had arisen he sat down ;
When thus upbraided him Antinous : 235

“Leiodes, what a speech has ’scaped thy lips,
A sad and grievous one—when such I hear,
I must rebuke thee—that this bow forsooth
Will many princes rive of life and soul,
For that thou lackest strength to string and bend it ! 240
Thy mother, who thee bare, gave thee no thews
To bend the bow and send the arrow home ;
But many of the noble princes here
Will quickly show that they can string the bow.”

Then, turning to the goatherd, thus he spake : 245

“Now up, Melanthius, and in the hall
Kindle a fire, and straight before it place
A chair, a large one ; fleeces lay on it ;
And from the store of suet here within
Bring forth a mighty round ; and when the youths 250
Have warmed the bow, and greased it with the fat,

Again we will make trial of the bow,
And carry out the contest to the end."

Melanthius the fire kindled straight,
Which never wearies in its toil for man; 255
And brought a chair, and fleeces laid thereon,
And from the store of suet there within
He brought a mighty round: and when the youths,
The princes, warmed the bow, they essay made,
But none of them could string it; vast the lack 260
Of lustihood they showed. The twain held back,
Antinous and proud Eurymachus;
Who first and bravest of the suitors were.

Meanwhile the herdsman and the swineherd went
In company together from the hall: 265
Ulysses too, the godlike chief, himself
Outside the palace followed after them.
When they beyond the gates and courtyard were,
He thus addressed them with these kindly words:

"Herdsman, and thou the swineherd, I would fain
A word with ye; or shall I hold my peace? 271
My inclination urges me to speak:
How would it be with you? how would ye act?

Would ye stand by Ulysses if by chance

He suddenly arrived? or if some god 275

Should guide him hither, which side would ye take,

The suitors' or Ulysses'? Speak the truth;

Say how your mind and will would prompt your acts."

The herdsman of the kine thus answered him:

"O Father Jove, accomplish this my prayer, 280

That he may hither come, led by some god!

Then shouldst thou see how much my might is worth,

And how my deeds should follow up my words."

And so Eumæus prayed to all the gods

That wise Ulysses should return again. 285

And when he saw their truth and faithfulness,

In answer he addressed them with these words:

"Lo! here I am; yea, after many woes,

Now on the twentieth year I reach my home:

And well I know that I have hither come, 290

In answer to the prayers of you alone

Of all my servants; of the men not one

Have I yet heard, praying for my return.

I tell you now, how it will after be:

If god subdue the suitors by my hands, 295

Then both of you with wives will I provide,
And lands and house allot, close by my own;
Compeers and brethren ever, in my eyes,
Shall ye be henceforth to Telemachus.
And now a certain proof I show to you, 300
That ye may know and trust me in your souls.
Lo! here the cicatrice, which marks the wound
Which the boar gave me with his gleaming tusk,
When with the sons of lord Autolycus
I went a-hunting on Parnassus Mount." 305

He spoke, and from the scar drew back his rags;
And when they both saw plainly, and believed,
They wept, and round the warrior threw their arms,
Embracing him with overflowing love:
They kissed the head and shoulders of the chief; 310
E'en so Ulysses kissed their heads and hands.
The setting sun had found them weeping still,
Had not Ulysses checked them with these words:

"Restrain your tears and weeping now, for fear
Some one may see us coming from the hall, 315
And tell of us; but let us one by one
Re-enter now within, not all together;

I first, then ye ; and let this be our plan :
The rest of all the haughty company,
The suitors, will not readily allow 320
The bow and quiver to be given to me ;
Therefore, Eumæus, do I trust to thee,
To bring the bow thyself along the hall,
And place it in my hands ; the women tell
To lock the solid gateways of the hall ; 325
And if by chance they hear a noise within,
Of groans of men, or tumult in the courts,
Not to approach the doors, but there remain
At their accustomed labour silently.
Worthy Philœtius, I order thee 330
To fasten with its bolt the courtyard gates,
And with a rope besides to lash them fast."

He spoke, and sought again the well-thronged halls,
And on the chair sat down whence he had risen ;
And the two servants of the godlike chief 335
Re-entered after him the palace halls.
Eurymachus was turning in his hands
The bow from end to end, and warming it
Before the glowing fire : for all his pains

He could not string it: from his manly heart 340

He uttered a deep groan, and grieving said:

“What grief for me! what grief for all of us!

Not so much for the marriage do I grieve,

Though that be grief enough; for other dames

And many are there of our Grecian race, 345

In sea-girt Ithaca and other lands:

But this I grieve for more, that we have proved

So far inferior to the godlike chief,

Ulysses; none of us can bend his bow;

Not one of us: shame on us all for aye!” 350

Then spake Antinous, Eupeithes' son:

“Eurymachus, there is no cause for shame;

And thou thyself must know that so it is.

To-day it is the holy festival

Of him, the Archer-god, throughout the folk: 355

Who then could bend a bow at such a time?

Lay by the bow, and let the axes stand;

No one will meddle with them, well I ween,

Here in the palace of Laertes' son.

But come, now let the cup-bearer begin 360

To fill our goblets up from right to left,

And let us pour libations, and lay by
The stubborn bow; and by to-morrow's dawn,
Give orders to Melanthius to bring
The very choicest she-goats of the herd, 365
That to the Archer of the sounding bow,
Even to Apollo, we may offer up
The haunches: after we will try the bow,
And carry out the contest to the end."

Thus spake Antinous, and they approved. 370
The heralds then poured water on their hands;
The youth to overflowing crowned the bowls,
And passed the wine in goblets round to all;
And when they all in turn libations made,
And to their souls' full lust they all had quaffed, 375
Ulysses in his subtlety thus spake:

"Ye princely suitors of the peerless Queen,
List that ye hear the words I crave to say:
And chiefly I address Eurymachus,
And thee, Antinous, thou godlike chief, 380
Who now hast spoken in so seemingly wise:
The bow now lay aside, trust to the gods;
And by to-morrow's dawn, god will not fail

To give the victory to whom he will.

But now to-day give me the polished bow, 385

That I may try my strength and skill with you :

If still the might which in my supple limbs

Once dwelt, remain ; or it be reft from me,

By weary pilgrimage and hardship sore."

He spake ; they all were angered mightily, 390

Dreading that he should string the polished bow.

Antinous reproached him with these words :

"Thou miserable stranger, void of wit ;

Art not content to feast in quiet here

Amidst this proud assembly ? Naught thou lack'st 395

Of our festivity ; each word thou hearest,

Yea, every speech we utter ; ne'er before

Has any stranger, much less beggar, heard

Our conversation : 'tis the wine, I trow,

The wine so sweet and strong, which ruins thee ; 400

Which ruins all who quaff with greedy lips,

And do not drink with sober self-control.

Wine crazed the famed Centaur Eurytion,

When, visiting the Lapithæ, he came

Within the palace of Pirithous : 405

For when his senses were distraught with wine,
He in the palace of that dauntless chief
Attempted in his frenzy shameful deeds.

The heroes, seized with anger, rushed on him,
And dragged him out of doors, and off they shore 410
His ears and nostrils with the cruel knife :

And thus, with mind distraught, he went his way,
Bearing the burthen of his reckless will.

Hence sprang the strife betwixt Centaurs and men ;

But fell on him the first the punishment, 415

For his excess in wine : and so for thee

A heavy penalty I prophesy,

If thou shouldst dare attempt to bend the bow.

No gentle treatment wilt thou then receive

Among our folk : to Echetus the king, 420

The cruel torturer of mortal men,

We in a black-hulled bark will ship thee off ;

From thence is no escape : so sit thee still,

And drink thy wine in peace ; and do not dare

With youthful lords to join in rivalry." 425

Then him addressed the chaste Penelope :

"Antinous, it is not generous,

Nor is it just, to treat with disrespect
The stranger-guests of my Telemachus,
Who to his palace come. Dost thou suppose 430
That if this stranger, in his confidence
Of might and sturdy arms, should bend the bow,
That he would lead me home, and bend my will
To be his bride? He does not dare himself
To cherish such a hope within his breast: 435
No need that one of you who banquet here
Should vex his soul with thought of such a thing;
That could not be; nay, could not ever be."

In answer to her spake Eurymachus:

"Icarus' daughter, chaste Penelope, 440
We have no thought that such an one as this
Should lead thee home; that were impossible:
But what by men and women might be said,
With shame we fear; that some inferior
Among the Greeks should say such words as these: 445
'How feeble are the princes who now woo
The consort of the noble chief! behold,
Not one of them can string his polished bow!
But when a wandering beggar comes by chance,

He strings the bow with ease, and sends the shaft 450
Through all the axes:—such like would they
say;

And such would be to us a shame indeed."

To him replied the chaste Penelope:

"Eurymachus, never among the folk
Can ye have hope of good report or fame, 455
Ye who dishonour and despoil the home
Of the renown'd chief: talk not of shame!
This stranger is a strong and stalwart man,
And boasts a father of a noble strain:
Give him the bow that we his prowess see; 460
For now I tell thee what I mean to do:
If by Apollo's aid he string the bow,
With cloak and tunic and with garments fair
He shall be clad; and I will give to him
A barb'd spear, to be his trusty ward 465
'Gainst dogs and men, and a two-edg'd sword;
And furnish him with sandals for his feet:
And I will give him conduct on his way,
Where'er he hath the mind and will to go."

Telemachus, the prudent youth, replied: 470

“My mother, no one of the Grecian lords
Has to the bow a better right than I;
And I can give or keep it as I will.
None of the chiefs of craggy Ithaca,
None of the princes of the isles which lie 475
By Elis, with its pasture-land for steeds;
None of these princes shall constrain my will:
Not even if I choose to give the bow,
For once and ever, to this stranger here.
Go to thy chamber, and thy household work 480
Resume once more, with distaff and with loom;
Urge on thy women to their tasks, and leave
The bow to men; and chief of all to me,
Who in my palace rightly bear the rule.”
With wonder she obeyed; her mind amazed, 485
That thus with prudence and authority
Her youthful son should speak: up to her room
Ascending with her maidens, she bewailed
Her husband so beloved; until sweet sleep
The blue-eyed goddess on her eyelids cast. 490
And then the worthy swineherd took the bow
To bring it, but the suitors through the hall

All shouted loudly at him; from the crowd

One of these scornful youths called out to him :

“Ho! whither dost thou bear the curvèd bow? 495

Thou miserable swineherd! art distraught?

Thy hounds so swift, which thou thyself hast bred,

Shall quickly thee devour among thy pigs;

Deserted, far from men; if but Apollo

And the immortal gods will favour us.” 500

They thus exclaimed, and he laid down the bow,

Back in its place, alarmed: for through the hall

Many were shouting out with threatening mien.

But from the other side Telemachus

Menaced him also, calling out aloud: 505

“Father, the bow bring hither; ’tis not well

Many to serve, as thou wilt quickly find:

Lest, though I younger be than thou by far,

I pelt thee forth with stones back to thy fields.

In might I am a better man than thou: 510

Would that I were, in might and strength of arm,

As much a better man than all of these,

The suitors, who are in my palace now!

Soon many an one of them would I drive forth,

In sorry fashion, from my palace here, 515
Back to his home; since naught but ill they scheme."

He spake; the suitors idly laughed at him,
And now they laid aside their bitter wrath
Against Telemachus: along the hall
The swineherd bare the arrows and the bow, 520
And, drawing near Ulysses, placed them then
In the skilled warrior's hands; and next, the nurse
He called aside, and thus he spoke to her:

"Wise Euryclea, thee Telemachus
Commands to lock the hall's close-fitted gates: 525
And if by chance ye hear a noise within
Of groans of men, or tumult in the courts,
Not to approach the door, but there remain
At your accustomed labour silently."

He spoke, nor idly sped away his words; 530
She locked the portals of the well-thronged halls.
Philœtius in silence hasted out,
And barred the high-walled courtyard's outer gates.
And underneath the corridor there lay
A cable of the byblus fibre spun, 535
Gear of a galley swinging to the oars;

With this he made the gates fast, and returned;
And on the chair sat down whence he had risen,
Keeping his eyes upon Ulysses fixed.

And he the bow was handling carefully, 540
Turning it round; proving it here and there,
For fear the worms had gnawed into its horn,
The while its master was afar away;
And, looking at his neighbour, one thus said:

“The beggar has a shrewd eye for a bow, 545
And skilfully he handles it: at home
Just such another bow perchance has he,
Or craves to make a like one: look at him!
See how the good-for-nothing vagabond
Twists it about within his cunning hands!” 550

Another of these scornful youths replied:
“May all the luck he finds be just as much
As he has strength to string the bow; no more.”

Thus spake the suitors; but the wily chief,
When he the mighty bow on every side 555
Had scanned, and to his mind had handled it,—
As one well-skilled in harp and minstrelsy,
When he the twisted sheep-gut at both ends

Has fastened with a knot, and straight with ease
On a new pin strings up the tightened cord,— 560
Thus, with no more ado, the mighty bow
Ulysses strung; and then he held it fast,
And with right hand and finger proved the string;
And clear it rang beneath his touch, as sounds
The swallow's twittering note. A mighty thrill 565
Fell on the suitors; wan were all their cheeks:
And Jove deep thundered, token of his will.
Then smiled the godlike and enduring chief,
That Saturn's son, who aye in mystery
His counsels hides, a portent had vouchsafed. 570
He took the arrow which before him lay
Upon the table, bared for its swift flight;
The others in the hollow quiver yet
Were resting, which the Greeks were soon to
prove:
He laid it on the centre of the bow, 575
And drew the string adjusted to the notch;
And from the chair whereon he sat afar,
He with unswerving aim the arrow shot.
Through all the axe loops, from the first to last,

Sped the brass-laden shaft; not one it missed: 580

And then the chief Telemachus addressed:

“Telemachus, thy guest now sitting here

Within thy halls brings naught of shame on thee:

I did not miss my mark a jot; nor long

Strained I to string the bow; still in me dwells 585

Some strength, I ween; nor rests on me the scorn

With which the suitors would dishonour me.

But now it is full time that we prepare

A banquet for the princes of the Greeks,

Now by the light of day; and afterwards 590

They shall be entertained with song and dance,

Which are the crowning gladness of the feast.”

With that he nodded with his threatening brows:

And then Ulysses' well-belovèd son

Telemachus girt on his keen-edged sword, 595

And in his grasp he seized his trusty spear;

And near him, by his chair he took his stand,

Armed, with his gleaming weapons in his hand.

BOOK XXII.

ARGUMENT.

The doom of the suitors.

DAY 42.

AND then the chief Ulysses threw aside
His rags and his disguise; aloft he sprang
Upon the spacious threshold; in his hands
The bow, and quiver with its arrows filled.
He poured the feathered shafts upon the ground 5
There at his feet, and to the suitors spoke:
“This mighty task is ended: let us see
If I another mark may chance to hit,
Which never archer heretofore has struck;
And if Apollo fame will grant to me.” 10
And on Antinous he levelled straight
The cruel shaft, who then had laid his hands

Just on the golden chalice, in the act
To raise it double-handed to his lips,
That he might drink; and little thought had he 15
Of death; for who would dream that one alone
Among so many joyous revellers,
However brave he were, would dare to hurl
Grim death and doom on him amongst them all?
But him Ulysses covered with his shaft, 20
And sent it through his gullet; the bright point
Went through and through, piercing his tender throat:
Backward he lurched, stricken; and from his hand
The cup slipped; straightway from his nostrils gushed
In a thick jet the human blood; in spasm 25
He kicked the table over with his foot;
The food upon the ground was cast; defiled
Were bread and viands. With an uproar wild
The suitors shouted when they saw him fall,
And springing to their feet throughout the hall 30
They sought along its solid walls for arms
On all sides, in their terror: none they found;
Nor shield nor trusty spear was there at hand.
Then they reviled the chief with angry words:

“Stranger, that was a luckless shot of thine 35

To hit a man; no contests more for thee,
But sheer destruction, whence is no escape;
For thou hast slain a chief who is by far
The noblest of the youths of Ithaca:

Therefore the vultures here shall strip thy bones.” 40

Thus spake they, one and all; because they thought
That he unwittingly had slain the prince.

Fools! they but little knew how in its coil
Destruction now was griping all of them.

“Ulysses, with a frowning glance, thus spoke: 45

“Ye dogs! ye thought I never would return,
Or reach my home again, from Trojan soil:
And so my home ye spoiled; my women slaves
Ye forced to yield themselves to your vile lust;
Behind my back my wife ye dared to woo, 50
While I was yet alive: no dread had ye
Or of the gods, who dwell in the high heaven,
Or of man’s vengeance, yet to fall on you:
Now in his toils Destruction sweeps you all.”

He spake: wan terror fell on all of them; 55
Each looked about with anxious eye, to scan

Whither from sheer destruction he might flee.

Eurymachus alone to him replied :

“Since thou, Ulysses, lord of Ithaca,

Hast hither come at last, we can but say 60

Thy words are only just, which tell the deeds

Done by the Grecian princes : many wrongs

Have they committed in thy halls and lands :

But he lies there who was to blame for all,

Antinous ; 'twas he contrived all this : 65

Not that he longed or wished to wed thy spouse,

So much as he had other deep designs,

Which Saturn's son has never brought to pass :

That he himself should bear the regal sway

O'er the domain of pleasant Ithaca ; 70

And so he ambush laid to slay thy son ;

And now has earned his just deserts,—his doom.

But spare thy people : we will make amends

For all this waste in feast and revelry

Within thy halls ; and gather from the folk 75

A fine, which we all round will pay to thee,

Of twenty oxen, or their worth, from each ;

And gold, and bronze : and so that thus thy heart

May be appeased: till then, no one in aught
Can blame thee for thy anger, justly caused." 80

Ulysses, with a frowning glance, replied:

"Eurymachus, if ye would yield to me
Your heritages, all that ye possess,
And all of you would add thereto besides,
I would not stay my hand for all this wealth; 85
Until ye suitors paid me with your lives,
For all the villanies which ye have wrought:
And now it lies before you, or to fight
Or flee; who yet may 'scape his death and doom:
But some, I ween, will not their ruin shun." 90

He spake; their knees were nerveless, sank their
hearts.

Eurymachus a second time then spake:

"Comrades, he will not stay his cruel hands,
This man who has the quiver and the bow;
But from the polished threshold he will rain 95
His shafts on us, till he have slain us all:
So let us turn to battle, draw your swords;
Against his arrows, dealing winged death,
Oppose the tables; at him one and all,

Together ; from the threshold and the gates 100
Now let us hurl him back, and force our way
Into the city, and a war-cry raise ;
Then soon this fellow will have shot his last."

He spake, and forth he flashed his trenchant sword,
Brazen and double-edged, and dashed at him 105
With a terrific shout: the godlike chief
At the same time an arrow launching forth,
Full on the breast struck him ; the feathered shaft
His liver bored ; his sword fell from his hand,
And doubled o'er the table forward pitched 110
He writhing: fell the viands on the floor,
And the two-handled cup ; in his death-throes
The earth he with his forehead struck ; his chair
He overthrew, spurned by his dying heel ;
And o'er his eyes the mist of darkness fell. 115

Amphinomus drew forth his keen-edged blade,
And at renowned Ulysses forward sprang,
To drive him from the gates ; but him forestalled
Telemachus, and with his brazen spear
Smote him behind, between the shoulder-blades,— 120
Through to the breast he drove it ; with a crash

He fell, and with full forehead smote the ground.
Telemachus sprang backward from his foe,
And the long-shafted spear left there behind him,
Amphinomus transfixing; for he feared 125
That if he stayed to drag the weapon forth,
One of the Grecian chiefs would rush at him,
And with the sword-point pierce him with a thrust;
Or, as he forward stooped, would cut him down:
And so he ran to his dear father's side, 130
And, standing near him, spake these winged words:

“Father, I now will fetch a shield for thee,
Two spears, and brazen helm to guard thy brows;
And I myself will armour don, and give
Mails to the herdsman, and the swineherd too: 135
We shall fight better in our mail of proof.”

Wary Ulysses answered in reply:

“Run quick and fetch them, while for my defence
Some arrows yet are left; lest from the door
They drive me,—me alone against them all.” 140

He spake: Telemachus obeyed his 'hest,
And to the chamber ran, where lay the arms;
And thence he chose four shields, and lances eight,

And brazen helmets four, with horsehair plumes.
He brought them running swiftly; soon in haste 145
He stood by his dear father's side again:

And he himself first sheathed his limbs in brass,
And the two servants likewise donned their mail;
And in their gleaming arms they took their stand
Around the chief Ulysses, skilled in war. 150
And while the arrows lasted, still he shot;

And one by one, with his unswerving aim,
Struck down the suitors; in whole ranks they fell.

When all the arrows from the King had sped,
Against the door-posts of the well-built hall 155

He laid the bow, against the shining walls:
And then himself he o'er his shoulders drew
The fourfold shield; and on his mighty head
The casque of proof, decked with a horsehair plume;
With menace dread, nodded his lofty crest: 160
And lances twain with brazen heads he grasped.

A postern was there in the solid wall,
Which by the upper threshold of the hall
Gave access to a narrow corridor;
Well-fitted folding-doors the passage closed: 165

Ulysses to the swineherd gave command
To guard its entrance, and to take his stand
Close to its opening, where there was but room
For an attack in single file alone.

Then Agelaus to the suitors spoke: 170

“O comrades, cannot one of us ascend
The staircase of the postern, and from thence
Alarm the people, and a war-cry raise?
Then soon this fellow will have shot his last.”

Melanthius, the goatherd, thus replied: 175

“That is not possible, my noble chief,
Because the beauteous gateways of the hall
Are perilously near; hard it would be
To pass the entrance of the corridor;
One man could hold the post against us all, 180
If he were brave and trusty: but I ween
That from the arm-room I can bring you mails,
To arm yourselves withal; for well I know
That there Ulysses and his noble son,
And nowhere else, the arms and armour placed.” 185

Thus spake the goatherd; by the narrow stair
Ascending from the hall he clambered up,

And reached the chambers of the noble chief:

'And thence twelve shields he took, as many
spears,

And brazen helmets with thick horsehair plumes; 190

And quickly he returned and brought the arms,

And to the suitors gave he them in haste.

Then sank Ulysses' heart and shook his limbs,

Soon as he saw them girding on their mail,

And the long lances wielding in their hands: 195

Then vast his emprise seemed: he quickly turned,

And to Telemachus spake winged words:

"Telemachus, who gives these arms for strife?

One of the women, or Melanthius?"

Telemachus, the prudent youth, replied: 200

"Father, I am alone to blame in this,

None else; the solid chamber door I left

Ajar, by one of them too well espied.

Noble Eumæus, do thou go at once

And close the chamber door, and search about 205

If any of the women this have done;

Or else mayhap the son of Dolius,

Melanthius: I think 'tis he, no doubt."

As thus with one another they conversed,
Melanthius, the goatherd, went again 210
Up to the chamber for the beauteous arms.
The swineherd saw him, and he quickly turned
Towards Ulysses standing near, and said :

“Son of Laertes, fertile in resource,
He whom we all suspected is the man 215
Who did the hateful mischief; there he goes
Into the chamber : tell me now, in sooth,
Shall I the scoundrel slay if I should prove
The better man ? or shall I bring him here,
That he may suffer for the villanies 220
Which he has in thy palace schemed so oft ?”

Wily Ulysses answered in reply :

“Telemachus and I will hold in check
The haughty suitors here within the halls,
However furious be their assault. 225
Go both of ye, and bind him hand and foot,
And cast him down upon the chamber floor,
And lash him to a plank behind his back ;
And then to him make fast a twisted cord,
And to the lofty column hoist him up, 230

Anear the roof-tree beams; and leave him there
Alive, to suffer bitter, lingering pangs."

He spake; they heard him and obeyed his 'hest.
They to the chamber came unmarked by him,
Who in its furthest corner sought for arms; 235
They two at either door-post lurked without:
And when the goatherd to the threshold came,
As in one hand he held a beauteous casque,
And in the other hand a buckler broad,
Stained with the mildew and the rust of age, 240
Belonging to Laertes, which he bare
When but a youth,—so long it there had laid,
The seams were gaping of its leathern thongs,—
They rushed on him, and seized him by the hair,
And dragged him back within the room again, 245
And hurled him on the floor with anguished heart;
And as Ulysses, the enduring chief,
Laertes' noble son, had ordered them,
They bound his hands and feet behind his back,
Stiffly together with soul-fretting gyves; 250
And then made fast to him a twisted rope,
And to the lofty pillar hoisted him

Anear the roof-tree beams; and scoffing him,

Eumæus thus addressed him with these words:

“Watch there, Melanthius, the livelong night, 255
Lulled in thy downy couch, as thee befits;
Nor shalt thou fail to mark the early Dawn
As she arises from her golden throne,
Above the Ocean-tide: when thou art wont,
For thy dear friends the suitors, here to bring 260
Thy goats, and labour for their banqueting.”

There he was left, fast bound in wretched gyves;
They closed the doors, and in their armour clad
Rejoined Ulysses, ready of resource.
Panting with lust for battle, there they stood, 265
The four upon the threshold; many more,
And valiant men they were, within the hall:
When Pallas' self drew nigh, the child of Jove,
The form and voice of Mentor she assumed;
The chief rejoiced to see her, and thus spake: 270

“Mentor, stand by us in our need; remember
Thy comrade, and his friendly acts to thee;
In age thy fellow, as in kindly deeds.”

Thus spake the chief, though knowing it was she,

Minerva, who stirs up the hosts to war. 275

The suitors shouted loudly from the hall ;

And Agelaus first, Damastor's son,

Reproached her from the other side and said :

“Mentor, let not Ulysses thee cajole

To fight against us, and to take his side; 280

For ours will be the winning side, I ween :

And when we kill the father and the son,

Thou shalt with them be slain, if thou shouldst dare

To do, as now thou hast the mind to do,

Within these halls ; thy head shall pay the price ; 285

And when with our good swords we lower thy pride,

Thy goods, whate'er thou hast within thy house

And out of doors, we will in common mix,

With what Ulysses has ; nor will we leave

Or son or daughter living in thy halls ; 290

Nor thy loved wife, in Ithaca to dwell.”

They spake. Minerva was in bitter wrath ;

With angry words Ulysses she addressed :

“Ulysses, out on thee ! thou hast no more

The might and valour which thou hadst of yore, 295

When for nine years thou foughtest stubbornly

For peerless Helen of the snow-white arms,
Against the Trojan hosts: in that stern strife
Full many a hero didst thou strike to earth;
And by thy counsel Priam's city fell, 300
And its broad streets were waste. How is it now,
When thou art in thy home and heritage,
Thou pulest, that thou hast to show thy might
Against these suitors? Forward, comrade mine;
Stand by my side, and see my handiwork; 305
And watch how Mentor, son of Alcimus,
Among thy foes repays thy kindly deeds."

Thus spake the goddess; nor would yet vouchsafe
Decisive victory: it was her will
To test yet more the might and hardihood 310
Both of Ulysses and his noble son;
And she flew upwards through the murky hall,
And in a swallow's shape above the fray
She perched herself upon a roof-tree beam.

And Agelaus then, Damastor's son, 315
Urged on the suitors; with Eurynomus,
Amphimedon, and Demoptolemus,
Pisander, who was king Polyctor's son,

And Polybus, the hero skilled in war :

These were the bravest of the suitors left, 320

Who lived to fight yet longer for their lives ;

For many now had fallen before his bow,

And under the dread shower of his shafts :

To all these Agelaus spake and said :

“ Friends, soon this man will stay his mighty hands :

Mentor with idle vaunts has disappeared ; 326

And these are left alone before the gates :

Therefore hurl not your lances all together,

But let six launch their weapons first. If Jove

Would only grant that we Ulysses smite, 330

And earn renown ! If he should chance to fall,

Of all the rest we need have little heed.”

He spake ; they launched their weapons at his 'hest,

With fiery zeal, which Pallas turned aside :

Of these, one struck the threshold of the hall ; 335

Another struck the massive double gates ;

The while another's spear, with ashen shaft

Laden with brazen barb, hung in the wall.

And when the suitors' spears flew harmless by,

Thus spake the godlike and enduring chief : 340

"Now, friends, I give the word: 'tis now for us
To hurl our spears against the suitors' band;
Who pant to slay and spoil us of our arms,
And add another to their evil deeds."

He spake, and they all hurled their barb'd spears, 345
And with unerring aim, upon the foe:
Ulysses struck down Demoptolemus;
And young Telemachus, Euryades;
The swineherd with his lance smote Elatus;
The herdsman of the kine Pisander slew: 350
These all together fell, and bit the dust;
And to the further limit of the hall
Drew back the suitors' band: these forward rushed,
And dragged the weapons from their slaughtered foes.

Again the suitors launched their barb'd spears, 355
Eager; but Pallas turned the most aside:
Of these, one struck the threshold of the hall;
Another smote the massive double gates;
The while another's spear, with ashen shaft
Laden with brazen barb, hung in the wall. 360
And yet Amphimedon smote in the wrist
Telemachus,—a grazing wound; the brass

Scored with its barb the surface of the skin.

Ctesippus smote Eumæus o'er his shield

With his long spear, which grazed his shoulder-blade, 365

And hurtling o'er him fell upon the ground.

Then they who stood around the wary chief,

Ulysses, versed in wiles, their barbéd spears

Together hurled upon the suitors' throng :

And he who fencéd cities overturned, 370

Ulysses, then struck down Eurydamas ;

And young Telemachus, Amphimedon ;

The swineherd, Polybus ; and in the breast

The herdsman of the kine Ctesippus smote ;

And, glorying at his fall, addressed him thus : 375

“Thou ribald scoffer, Polytherses' son,

No more to reckless folly yield thyself,

Nor talk big words ; but turn thee to the gods,

And pray to them, for they almighty are :

This for thy offering to the stranger-guest, 380

The ox-foot which thou gavest to the chief,

The godlike one, when begging in these halls.”

Thus spake the herdsman of the slow-paced kine.

Then hand to hand with his far-reaching spear

Ulysses drove clean through Damastor's son ; 385

And at Leiocritus, Euænor's son,

Telemachus delivered a fierce thrust,

And in mid flank he smote him with his lance,

And through and through he drove the barb'd brass :

Headlong he fell ; his forehead struck the earth. 390

Then from the lofty roof-tree shook aloft

Minerva her dread ægis, blasting men ;

With horror they were scared, in terror fled

Throughout the hall, like cattle of the fold,

The which the flitting gadfly with its sting 395

Goads into madness, and drives up and down,

In springtide, when the days are lengthening out :

And these as falcons from the mountain peaks,

With crooked talons and strong curv'd beaks,

Fall swooping on the smaller birds, which flee 400

Cowering from upper air, and scour the plain,—

On them the falcons mercilessly pounce,

No shelter for the quarry, no escape,

And men who look upon the sport rejoice ;

So these in fury on the suitors rush, 405

And smite them right and left throughout the hall.

And terrible the groans of those who fell
With cloven skulls: reeked all the floor with blood.

Leiodes then sprang forward to the chief,
And grasped his knees, and spake these wingèd
words:

410

"Ulysses, I entreat thee on my knees,
Spare me, have mercy on me! I aver
That never any woman in these halls
Did ever I misuse by word or deed,
And ever did I strive my best to stay
The other suitors who would do such deeds:
But they, alas! would not be swayed by me,
Nor would restrain their hands from violence;
And so for their misdeeds they earn their doom:
But I, a seer, who offer sacrifice,
Among all these, if I must fall with them,
Fall guiltless; and but little favour win
For all the righteous deeds which I have done."

420

Ulysses, with a frowning glance, replied:

"If thou art as thou claimest now to be,
A seer who offers sacrifice for these,
How often has it chanced to thee to pray

425

That the sweet hour to bring my home-return
Might be afar from me? that my loved wife
Might follow thee, and children bear to thee? 430
Therefore thou shalt not shun death's gloomy sleep."

As thus he spake, he seized in his strong hand,
A sword which near him lay upon the ground,
Which Agelaus dropped as slain he fell:
With this he aimed at him a sweeping blow 435
Full in the neck; as on his lips the words
Lingered, his head was mingled with the dust.

But Terpes' son escaped the doom of death,
The minstrel Phemius, who sang his lays
Perforce among the suitors at their 'hest; 440
He stood, his clear-toned harp still in his hand,
Close by the postern-gate; with doubtful mind
Whether he should from that fell banquet-hall
Flee to the outer court, and refuge take
Beneath the altar of almighty Jove, 445
On which Laertes and Laertes' son
So often had the thighs of oxen burnt;
Or throw himself before Ulysses' feet,
And clasp his knees, a suppliant for life:

And this to him in doubt appeared the best, 450

To clasp Ulysses' knees—a suppliant.

He laid his hollow lyre upon the ground

Betwixt the bowl and chair with silver studs,

And threw himself prostrate before the chief,

And clasped his knees, and spake these wingèd

words:

455

“Ulysses, I entreat thee on my knees,

Spare me, have mercy! It will be a grief

Ever to thee hereafter, if thou slay

A minstrel; one who sings to gods and men.

Self-taught am I; god only in my soul 460

Implanted all this thrilling power of song;

And now methinks I chant my prayer to thee,

As to a god; lust not to slay me here.

Telemachus will tell thee I speak truth,

Thy cherished son; that not with my free will 465

Came I within thy palace; nor for greed

Did I attend the suitors' revellings,

And sing for them: they brought me here by force,

They many, who were stronger far than I.”

He spoke. Telemachus in pride of strength 470

Stood near, and overheard him as he spake,

And turning quickly to his father said :

“Hold, smite not with thy sword this blameless
one :

Medon the herald let us also save,

Who ever with affection treated me, 475

When but a child I was, in our own home :

Except the swineherd or Philœtius

Have slain him by mischance ; or he have met

With thee in fury storming through the hall.”

He spake : keen-witted Medon heard his words, 480

From where he lay concealed beneath a couch ;

O'er him was stretched an ox-hide newly flayed,

To 'scape grim death : he quickly from the couch

Sprang up in haste ; the hide he cast away,

And threw himself before Telemachus, 485

And clasped his knees ; and supplicating him,

He thus addressed him with these winged words :

“Oh ! here am I, dear boy ; oh ! hold thy hand ;

And tell thy father, in his mighty strength,

To stay his trenchant sword from wounding me, 490

In his just wrath against the suitors' band ;

Who wasted all his household and his goods,
Nor honoured thee, the madmen! in thy halls."

The wise Ulysses smiled, and him addressed:

"Have courage; he has saved and rescued thee, 495
That thou mayst know thyself, and others tell,
That goodness better is than wickedness:
But leave the hall, and go without the gate,
Away from all this slaughter, both of ye;
And in the outer courtyard sit ye down, 500
Thou, and the minstrel of the many lays:
That I do here what yet I have to do."

He spake; the two passed quickly through the hall,
And at the altar of almighty Jove
They crouched them down, and ever round them cast
Uneasy glances; looking still for death. 506
Ulysses sharply glanced around the hall
To mark if any of his foes were left
Still living, and had 'scaped their death and doom:
He saw them all; all grimly piled in heaps, 510
In blood and dust: as fish which from the sea
The fisher in his mesh-wove net has swept
Upon the strand of a deep sandy bay,—

There, panting for the salt sea waves, they lie
Upon the sand, and 'neath the blazing sun 515
They gasp away their lives,—thus, piled in heaps,
One on another stretched, the suitors lie.

Then wise Ulysses thus addressed his son:

“Telemachus, go summon now to me
Nurse Euryclea: for I fain would say 520
Some words to her, which now are on my mind.”

He spake; Telemachus obeyed his 'hest,
And knocking at the door addressed the nurse:

“O venerable dame, come quickly hither;
Thou faithful guardian of the handmaidens, 525
Who serve us in our palace halls, approach;
My father calls thee, and would speak with thee.”

He spake, nor idly sped away his words;
The doors she opened of the well-thronged halls,
And forward came, led by Telemachus. 530
She found Ulysses midst his slaughtered foes:
E'en as a lion, stained with blood and gore,
Which stalks amidst the fold, full gorged with prey,—
All blood-stained are his muzzle and his chest,
And terrible is he to look upon,— 535

Thus, even so, all over feet and hands,
Ulysses grimly is incarnadined.
She, with the corses and the streams of blood
And all the mighty deed before her eyes,
Was ready to shout out triumphantly. 540
Ulysses checked her in her eager joy,
And thus restrained her with these winged words:
 "Within thy soul rejoice; restrain thyself,
O aged woman; shout thou not for joy:
It is unhallowed to give words to vaunts 545
Over our slaughtered foes who round us lie.
God's will and their ill deeds have struck them down:
No mortal man they honoured on this earth,
Or good or bad, who to their presence came;
And for this reason, an appalling fate 550
Has followed surely on their evil deeds.
Now tell me of the women in my halls,
Who are the guilty, who the innocent?"
Thus his beloved nurse to him replied:
 "My son, I will the truth to thee disclose: 555
Within thy halls are fifty serving-maids,
Whom we have taught their duties to perform,—

The wool to card, and household work to do;
And twelve of these in all have gone the way
Of shamelessness, and no respect have shown 560
To me or to Penelope herself.

And only lately has Telemachus
Arrived at man's estate; and even now
His mother would not him permit as yet
To rule the women servants in the halls. 565

But let me to the upper chamber hie,
And to thy wife tell all; on whom, in sooth,
Some god has surely sent a slumber deep."

Prudent Ulysses answered in reply:

"By no means wake her; send the women here, 570
Those who beforetime did these deeds of shame."

He spake; the aged nurse passed through the hall,
And told the women to approach in haste.

Meanwhile Ulysses summoned to his side
The herdsman, swineherd, and Telemachus; 575
And thus addressed them with these winged words:

"Begin ye now the corpses forth to bear,
And make the women help you in your task;
The beauteous chairs and tables make them next

With water and absorbent sponges cleanse 580

And when ye all have ordered in the house

Lead forth the women from the well-built halls

And, in the space between the outhouse and

And the fair wall which bounds the outer court,

Smite with your keen-edged blades the life away 585

From all of them ; and, from their memory

All their unhallowed and clandestine love.

He spake : the band of women thither came ;

Hot tears they shed, lamenting bitterly.

And first they bare the corpses from the hall 590

And laid them out beneath the corridor

Which ran along the courtyard's lofty wall.

One on another piled : with stern command

Ulysses urged them to their loathsome task

And they perforce the corpses carried forth 595

Then they the tables and the couches fair

With water and absorbent sponges cleanse.

Telemachus, with him the herdsmen twain

Meanwhile with shovels scraped the earthen floor

Of the fair hall, with its carved tracery : 600

The women bare the dreadful sweepings forth.

And when they all had ordered in the house,
They from the hall led out the wretched slaves :
In the mid space between the outhouse dome,
And the fair wall which bound the outer court, 605
They hemmed them in, from whence was no escape.
Then wise Telemachus addressed them thus :

“Think not that I intend to end the lives
Of these stained harlots with a stainless death ;
Who, with their lawless paramours, have heaped 610
Dishonour on my mother’s head and mine.”

He spake ; the cable of a dark-prowed ship
He took, which to a pillar he made fast,
And passed the end around the outhouse dome,
And stretched it out aloft, that with their feet, 615
When hanging from it, none could touch the ground :
As thrushes, with their fluttering wings, or doves,
When eager for the roost and for repose,
A dismal sleep awaits them,—when they fall
Into the springe laid for them in the copse,— 620
So in a row, with halters round their necks,
The wretched women all were hung together ;
And thus they died, a miserable death.

For some short moments with their feet they writhed
Convulsively, not long ; then all was still. 625

Then through the porch and courtyard forth they
led

Melanthius, and with the cruel knife
His nostrils and his ears they shore away,
Tore out his vitals, cast them to the dogs,
And pitiless cut off his hands and feet : 630
And then they cleansed and washed their hands and feet,
And sought Ulysses ;—ended was the work.

Then he nurse Euryclea thus addressed :

“Bring sulphur, nurse, the remedy of ills ;
Bring fire, that I may purify the hall : 635
And tell Penelope herself to come,
With all her handmaids ; and let all the slaves
Throughout the palace hither come at once.”

His dear nurse Euryclea him addressed :

“All that thou say'st is rightly said, my child. 640
But suffer me now first to bring to thee
Tunic and cloak and raiment ; stand not thus
With sorry rags wrapped round thy shoulders broad :
This a disgrace would be, in thine own halls.”

The wise Ulysses answered in reply: 645

“Now first of all bring fire to purify.”

He spake, and his beloved nurse obeyed :

And fire she brought, and sulphur ; and with these

The palace, and the hall, and outer court

The chief incensed and purified throughout. 650

Then through Ulysses' palace, broad and fair,

The aged woman went to tell them all,

And urge the women quickly to come thither.

They issued forth with torches in their hands,

And thronged around Ulysses, greeting him : 655

His head and shoulders kissed they, in their joy

And deep affection ; grasping both his hands.

A gentle yearning to give way to tears

And sobs of joyfulness swayed o'er his soul ;

And all of them he knew and recognised. 660

BOOK XXIII.

ARGUMENT.

Ulysses in his home recognised by Penelope.

DAYS 42-43.

THE aged woman, laughing to herself,
Exulting, to the upper chamber went,
To tell her mistress that her own dear lord,
Her husband, even then was in his home.
Fast moved her aged knees; swiftly her feet 5
Tripped under her; soon o'er her mistress's head
She stood, and thus addressed her with these words:
"Awake, dear child; awake, Penelope,
That thou with thine own very eyes mayst see,
What thou for all these days hast longed to see,— 10
These weary days! Ulysses,—he has come:

Yes, he is in thy home; is here at last,
And all the haughty suitors he has slain,
Who troubled thee and thine, and spoiled thy goods,
And wronged thy boy, thy dear Telemachus." 15

Then her addressed the chaste Penelope :

"Dear nurse, the gods have robbed thee of thy wits ;
For they the prudent can to folly bring,
And guide the foolish into wisdom's ways :
Now they have marred thy wits, sane heretofore. 20

Why dost thou mock me? vex'd is my soul:

Why dost thou tell me all these idle tales?

Why dost thou wake me from that gentle sleep

Which closed my eyelids with its soothing spell?

Ne'er have I slept so peacefully as now, 25

Since the sad day when my Ulysses sailed,

Following his evil fate to Ilium ;

That hateful Ilium, of the hateful name!

Now leave me ; go thy way back to the hall.

If any other of my serving-maids 30

Had roused me from my sleep with these wild tales,

I soon had sent her hence in sorry guise :

Be thankful that thy age protects thee now."

But Euryclea thus to her replied :

“I mock thee not, dear child : in very sooth 35

Ulysses now is here ; is in his home.

I tell thee that the stranger-guest is he ;

Him whom they all dishonoured in his halls.

Telemachus knew all this long ago,

That he was here ; but in his wisdom kept 40

His father's counsel, that he might avenge

The violence of those imperious men.”

Thus spake she : and the Queen gave way to joy,

And, bounding from her couch, embraced her nurse ;

And as the tears came rushing from her eyes, 45

She thus addressed her with these winged words :

“Dear nurse, but tell me ; tell me truly now :

If as thou say'st he now is here at home,

How did he lay his hands upon that crew,

That shameless crew, the suitors ; he alone, 50

And they so many still within these walls ?”

Thus the beloved nurse to her replied :

“I neither saw nor did they tell me how ;

But this I only know : I heard the groans

Of those who fell. We women sat together 55

Awe-stricken in the farthest of the rooms,
And all the chamber doors we kept fast locked;
Till thy son came, and called me from the hall:
For him, Telemachus, his father sent
To call me; and I found Ulysses then. 60
And there amidst his slaughtered foes he stood,
And they around him lay on the hard ground,
One on another: thou hadst joyed to see
Him—like a lion, stained with blood and gore.
Now at the gates of the fore court they lie, 65
Laid out in heaps; and he the palace fair
With sulphur has incensed and purified,
And ordered us a mighty fire to kindle;
And me has sent to fetch thee: therefore come,
That both of ye with loving hearts may tread 70
The path of happiness, who both have borne
So many woes. And now at last the hope
Which seemed so distant is accomplishèd;
And now he stands alive on his own hearth,
And thee has found, and his belovèd son, 75
Here in his halls: and them who wrought such ill
He has repaid with vengeance in his home."

Then her addressed the chaste Penelope :

"O dearest nurse, exult not yet so much,

Be not so jubilant: thou knowest well 80

How welcome he would come in these his halls

To all; but most to me and to his son—

The son of our affections. But, alas!

The tale thou tellest now cannot be true ;

Ah, no! but one of the immortal gods 85

It is, who has the haughty suitors slain,

Looking with horror on their insolence

And all their evil deeds: no mortal man,

Not one upon the earth, did they respect,

Or good or bad, who to their presence came; 90

And so they suffered for their wickedness.

But oh! he far away has lost all hope]

Of ever reaching home; is lost himself."

Then her beloved nurse to her replied :

“Child, what a speech has burst now from thy lips, 95

In that thou say'st thy husband, who is here,

Now standing by his hearth, will ne'er return!

Thy mind is ever hard to win to faith.

But I will give thee now another proof

Most manifest: the scar which marks the wound 100
Where the boar ripped him with his gleaming tusk.
And I was 'ware of this when bathing him;
And fain would I have told thee then thyself,
But with his hands upon my mouth he stayed me:
With thoughtful wisdom he restrained my words. 105
Come, for the truth of this I gage my life;
And if I now mislead thee with my tale,
Slay me at once, with a most cruel death."

The chaste Penelope to her replied:

"Dear nurse, 'tis hard for thee to penetrate . 110
The secret counsels of the eternal gods,
However great thy wisdom; ne'ertheless
Go we to seek my son, and to behold
The suitors slain, and who their slayer be."

She spake, and from the upper room descended, 115
While many anxious thoughts surged through her soul:
Should she keep far aloof and question him,
Her loved one? or rush up to him at once
And fold him in her arms, and on his head
Shower her kisses? But when she drew near, 120
And crossed the stony threshold of the hall,

Before Ulysses, in the fire's bright glow,
By the wall opposite she took her seat:
He by the lofty column sat, and kept
His eyes upon the ground; waiting to see 125
If she, his beauteous wife, would speak to him,
Now that she saw him with her own fond eyes.
In silence long she sat; stunned was her heart:
Now with fixed eyes she gazed upon his face;
And then again, clad in his sorry garb, 130
All recollection vanished from her mind.
Telemachus reproached her coldness thus:

“Mother, harsh mother! hard thy heart must be:
Why from my father hold thyself aloof?
Why wilt thou not draw near and sit by him? 135
Why wilt thou not address one word to him?
In sooth, no other woman saving thee
Would with so stubborn will keep far away
From her own husband, who had just returned
From twenty years of absence and of pain, 140
To her and to his native land again:
Thy heart is harder than the very rock.”

The chaste Penelope to him replied:

“My child, my heart is ’mazed within my breast;
I cannot speak to him, nor can I gaze 145
Yet on his countenance: but if it be
In very sooth Ulysses who has come
To his own home, full soon we shall be known
Well to each other, and without a doubt;
For we have certain proofs which we ourselves 150
Know well, but which from others are concealed.”

She spake; and smiled the much-enduring chief;
And quickly to Telemachus he said:

“My son, allow thy mother in our halls
To prove my truth; she soon will better know: 155
Now for the reason that I am unkempt,
And sorry garments wear, she scorneth me,
Nor can believe that I indeed am he.
But let us counsel take of other things,
And think how they be ordered for the best. 160
For he who haps to slay one single chief,
Whose partisans within the land are few,
Must flee from kith and kin and native soil:
But we have slain the bulwark of the state,
The choice of all the youth of Ithaca; 165

Therefore I urge thee, this consider well."

Telemachus, the prudent youth, replied :

"Thou only, father, canst provide for this ;

For all men say thy counsel is the best,

And that no mortal among mortal men 170

With thee in counsel can hold rivalry :

And we will follow thee with willing zeal,

Where'er thou lead ; nor prowess shalt thou lack

From us, as far as power in us lies."

Ulysses, skilled in craft, thus answer made : 175

"I tell thee, then, what seemeth best to me :

First with a bath refresh yourselves, and don

Gay garments for a solemn festival,

And make the women gaily deck themselves ;

And let the godlike minstrel with his harp 180

Lead with its thrilling chords the sportful dance :

So they who chance to hear the revelry,

The passer-by or those who dwell around,

May deem we hold a marriage-feast within ;

Lest the report wide through the city spread, 185

Of how the princely suitors all are slain,

Ere we can go afield to our domain,

With all its forest land; that we may there
Await whatever counsel for our cause
The Olympian god vouchsafe to bring to hand." 190

He spake; they heard his orders and obeyed.
After a bath they donned their tunics gay,
The women were decked out in bravery,
The godlike minstrel took his harp in hand,
And they all yielded to the pleasing sway 195
Of the bewitching song and graceful dance:
The spacious hall resounded to the beat
Of sportive youths' and comely women's feet.
And one who heard outside the palace walls
The sound of all the revelry, thus spake: 200

"Lo! of her many wooers, one at last
Has wed the Queen; the false one could not guard
The stately palace of her absent lord,
The husband of her youth, unto the end."

So said he, little knowing what had chanced. 205
Meanwhile Eurynomé, the stewardess,
Attended at the bath the dauntless chief,
In his own home at last: with olive oil
She him anointed, and about him cast

A mantle fair, and tunic; o'er his head 210

Pallas the spell of wondrous beauty threw;

Grander and more majestic swelled his form;

And from his head she shook the waving curls,

As beauteous as the hyacinthine flower:

And as the cunning workman who has learnt 215

From Vulcan and Minerva all his art,

O'erlays with gold the silver, and with pains

His graceful work to full perfection brings,—

E'en so the goddess o'er his head and form

The spell of wondrous manly beauty shed. 220

And like a god he issued from the bath,

And in the chair sat down whence he had risen,

Facing his wife; and thus he her addressed:

“Cruel! the gods who in Olympus dwell

Have laid within thy breast a sterner heart 225

Than gentle woman ever owned before:

In sooth, no other woman saving thee

Would with a stubborn will keep far aloof

From her own husband, who had just returned

From twenty years of absence and of woe, 230

To her and to his native land again.

But let it be. Nurse, spread a couch for me,
That I may lay me down alone and rest :
Iron is the heart which beats within her breast !”

Then him addressed the chaste Penelope : 235

“Cruel art thou ; I am not haughty, I ;
Nor do I lightly thee regard in aught,
Nor yet unduly hold myself aloof.
Ah ! well do I remember what thou wast,
How thou didst look when quitting Ithaca, 240
Sailing away in thy long-oarèd ship :
So Euryclea lay the couch for him
Outside the chamber door, the strong-made couch,
The very one he made with his own hands :
And on the massive couch outside the door, 245
Spread fleeces, robes, and blankets of bright hue.”

This speech she made to put him to the proof,
If he her husband were. In anger then
Ulysses thus addressed his constant wife :

“Lady, thou sayest this to vex my soul : 250
Who has the couch removed ? ’Twere hard indeed
For man to do, however skilled he were,—
Except a god should come ; he easily,

If so he willed, might move the couch away :
No living mortal, be he man or youth, 255
Could heave it lightly from its resting-place ;
For in that quaint-wrought bed a secret lies.
I wrought the couch myself, and no one else.
An olive bush within the courtyard grew,
Full grown, with leafy branches flourishing, 260
And solid as a column was its trunk :
I built a sleeping chamber round the tree,
Enclosing it ; finished with massive stones
The wall around, and roofed it deftly in ;
And fitted it with doors compactly made : 265
Then from the thick-leaved olive tree I sheared
The head away ; and with a brazen adze
The trunk I hewed, and fashioned from the root
With skill and care, and straightened with a line,
And so I wrought it for a centre post, 270
And bored it with an auger through and through.
From this commencing, I built up the couch,
Polished it into shape, and finished it,
Inlaying silver, gold, and ivory :
And last of all I stretched thereon the band 275

Of ox-hide, bright with its empurpled dye.

The secret of the couch I tell thee thus.

Lady, I know not if the couch remain

Still where it was, for me; or if perchance

Some one have moved it to another place, 280

And hewn it from its olive stock away."

Thus spake Ulysses: melted then her heart

And sank her limbs, as thus she recognised

The proof unfailing which his story gave;

And straight she rushed towards him bathed in tears, 285

And threw her arms around Ulysses' neck,

And kissed him tenderly, and thus she spoke:

"Ulysses, turn not angry looks on me,

Thou who art wiser far than other men.

The gods have mated us to misery: 290

For they were envious that we should pass

Our happy youth together, side by side;

And that we hand in hand should reach the bourn

And threshold of old age. Oh! chide me not,

Nor fret thee that I did not welcome thee 295

With fond affection when I saw thee first.

My shrinking heart has ever dreaded this,

Lest any man, a stranger, here should come
And with false words deceive me : many are they
Who aye contrive their plots of villany ; 300
For ne'er had Argive Helen, child of Jove,
Her love and honour to a stranger given,
If she had known her fate,—if she had known
How that the warlike Greeks would bring her back
To her belovèd home and native land. 305
But her the goddess tempted to foul sin,
Sin which before she never thought upon,—
A wretched sin, which brought on us our woe.
But now, as thou hast in thy tale revealed
The secret of the couch, which no one knows,— 310
No one but thou and I, and one beside,
My handmaid, Actor's child, Eurynomé,
Whom when I hither came my father gave
To be my follower ; who has kept for us,
Fast locked, the close-barred sleeping chamber door,—
Thou winnest faith in my ungentle soul." 316

She spake ; swept over him a storm of tears ;
He wept, embracing his sweet constant wife :
And as the land is welcome to the eyes

Of those who swimming struggle for their lives, 320
Whose gallant ship the sea-god in the deep
Has wrecked,—swept by the storm and billowy waves,
A few strong swimmers through the foaming sea
Escape and reach the shore, befouled with brine ;
Gladsome are they to tread once more dry land, 325
Escaped from doom,—even so gladsome she,
Who on her husband now casts wistful eyes :
And from his neck she could not yet unlock
Her white, fond arms. The rosy-fingered Dawn
Had shone on them still weeping in their joy, 330
Had not Minerva other schemes contrived.
In the far West she held belated Night ;
And by the Ocean-tide she kept the Dawn
Fast in her golden throne, nor let her yoke
Her bounding horses to give light to men,— 335
Lampus and Phaëthon, her fiery steeds.
Then wise Ulysses thus addressed his wife :
“O lady mine, we have not reached the term
Of all our trials yet ; remains behind
A labour vast, enduring, difficult, 340
Which I must yet accomplish to the full :

For so the spirit of Tiresias
Revealed to me, the day that I descended
To Hades' realms, to ask how to our home
We might return, my comrades and myself. 345
But turn we to our couch, beloved wife,
That we together rest in sweet repose."

Then him addressed the chaste Penelope :

"Thy couch is ready for thee when thou wilt ;
For now the gods vouchsafe to bring thee back 350
To thy fair home, and to thy native soil :
But since thou now hast mentioned that, which god
Has sure put in thy thoughts, oh tell me now
What is this trial? for full well I ween
That I at last must know it, what it be ; 355
To hear it now will be no worser grief."

The wise Ulysses thus replied to her :

"O wilful one, why dost thou urge me thus
To tell thee this? But as thou needs must know,
All I will tell thee ; naught will I conceal. 360
Thy soul will not be gladdened at my tale,
Nor I rejoice to tell it : for the seer
Through many cities of the human race

Bade me to wander, and to take with me
An oar right deftly shaped, till I should reach 365
A people who know nothing of the sea,
Who eat their food unflavoured with its salt,
And nothing know of ships with painted bows,
Or balanced oars, which are the wings of ships.
A sign he gave me unmistakeable, 370
Which I will tell thee : when on foreign soil
A wayfarer shall meet me, and shall say,
'The burthen which thy shoulder bears
Must be a winnowing fan, to husk the grain,'
There must I plant in earth the balanced oar ; 375
And to the Sea-god Neptune sacrifice
A ram, a bull, a boar, with solemn rites ;
And, home returning, offer hecatombs
To the immortal gods who rule in heaven,
To each and all of them in order due. 380
Then death shall gently come to me at last,
Escaped from sea, honoured, and full of years ;
And happy shall my subjects round me be :
All this the seer declared must be fulfilled."
To him replied the chaste Penelope : 385

"If the gods promise thee a good old age,
A hope there is thy woes will have an end."

Whilst thus with one another they conversed,
The nurse, assisted by Eurynomé,
Their couch with downy coverlets bedecked, 390
Neath the glad light of torches burning bright:
When they with ready haste had decked the couch,
To rest and to her chamber hied the nurse.
Eurynomé, the handmaid, marshalled them,
Bearing a torch to light them to their rest; 395
And then retired and left them to their joy:
Turned they in bliss and happiness once more
To love's mysterious rites, unused so long.

Telemachus, with him the herdsmen twain,
Then ceased to ply their feet, and from the dance 400
Broke off the women; and they sought repose,
And all was silent in the shadowy halls.

And when they two had love's sweet bliss enjoyed,
In gentle converse they their pastime took.
The lovely lady told him of herself, 405
Of all she long had suffered in her halls:
That hateful crew ever before her eyes,

The suitors ; who for her held revelry,
And wastefully slew kine and fatted sheep,
And from the casks in floods drew forth the wine. 410
Then in his turn noble Ulysses told
Of all the woes he brought on other men,
And all the miseries himself endured.
She listened to his tale with rapt delight ;
Sleep fell not on her eyelids, till she heard 415
All the adventures which he had to tell.

With the Cicones he his tale began,
And how he conquered them ; how next he came
To the rich land of the Lotophagi :
And then he told her all the Cyclops did, 420
How for his comrades brave he vengeance took,
Whom the fell savage mercilessly ate :
And then how Æolus he visited,
Who kindly welcomed him, and on his way
Sent him rejoicing ; but 'twas not his fate 425
To reach his native land, so fondly loved,
As yet ; but him the driving hurricane
Back to the deep, wherein the sea-fish gleam,
Hurled, deeply groaning at his wretched fate :

Then how the city of Telepylus 430
 He, voyaging, reached in Læstrigonia;
 And how those giants all his ships destroyed,
 With all their mailèd crews; and he alone,
 Ulysses, in his black-hulled galley 'scaped:
 And then of Circe's craft and many wiles 435
 He told; how in his oary bark he came
 To Hades' dreamy realms, to question there
 The spirit of the blind Tiresias,
 The Theban seer; and how he there beheld
 His hero comrades; and his mother dear, 440
 Who bare him, and who nursed him when a child:
 How the bewitching Sirens' lay he heard;
 And of the Shifting Rocks,—Charybdis dire,
 And Scylla also,—from whose fearful fangs
 No men have ever scathless yet come forth; 445
 And how his comrades slew the Sun-god's kine:
 How Jove, who launches thunder from on high,
 Struck with his levin-bolt his galley swift;
 And how his comrades perished utterly,
 Together all, and he alone escaped: 450
 And then how to Ogygia's isle he drifted,

And to the nymph Calypso,—she who there
Kept him enthralled, striving to win his love,
In her arched grot, and kindly cherished him ;
And immortality, and endless youth 455
For all his days, she offered him,—in vain ;
She could not bend his will to her desires :
How after many hardships he arrived
At the Phæacians', who as a god
With honour treated him, and in their ship 460
Sent him to his loved home and native land,
And bronze and gold and raiment gave to him.
This was the last adventure which he told,
As gentle sleep, which rests the weary limbs
And stills the carking thoughts, upon him fell. 465

Then blue-eyed Pallas other schemes contrived :
Soon as she deemed Ulysses had his fill
Of blissful converse with his gentle wife,
And rest from weariness, she straight aroused
The rosy-fingered Dawn from Ocean's tide, 470
And from her golden throne she made her rise,
The light to men to bring. From his soft couch
Ulysses rose, and thus addressed his wife :

“O lady mine, we both have had enough
Of trials manifold: thou weeping here, 475
Awaiting my return in ceaseless grief;
And as for me, Jove and the other gods
Have kept me bound in woe and misery,
Still vainly longing for my native shore.
But now the wished-for haven we have reached; 480
So do thou watch o’er all the household goods
Which yet remain to me within my halls.
As for my sheep which the proud suitors spoiled,
To make amends, I from the Grecian chiefs
Will many take by force; of their free will 485
Others they will repay, until my folds
Are all of them as full as erst they were.
And now to my domain I take my way,
The forest land; that I may see once more
My worthy father, who has grieved for me. 490
Therefore on thee, my own beloved wife,
So wise and prudent, I my mandate lay:
Soon as the sun is risen, far and wide
Will spread the rumour of the suitors slain:
Hie to thy upper chamber; sit thou there 495

Among thy maidens, out of sight of all;
Nor do thou converse hold with any one."

Thus spake the chief, and on his shoulders girt
His shining armour; and he next aroused
Telemachus, with him the herdsmen twain, 500
And bade them take their weapons in their hands;
And they obeyed, and donned their brazen mail:
The gates they open threw, and issued forth,
Ulysses leading them, as o'er the earth
Already spreading was the light of day; 505
But them Minerva still in night concealed,
As from the city swift she led them forth.

BOOK XXIV.



ARGUMENT.

The ghosts of the suitors in Hades—The ghost of Agamemnon relates the story of the death and funeral of Achilles before Troy—Strife and peace.

DAY 43.

AND then Cyllenian Hermes summoned forth
The slaughtered suitors' ghosts; and in his
hands

He bore his wondrous golden wand, wherewith
He soothes the eyes of mortal men to rest,
And opes them at his will; and with his wand 5
He urged them on, and led them on their way;
And gibbering they followed him: like bats
Which flit about a gloomy cavern's depths,
And gibber as they flit, if one should fall

From where they hang in clusters from the rock, 10

One to another clinging ; so the ghosts

Gibbered as they together sadly went.

And guileless Hermes led them on their way

Adown the darksome paths ; and on beyond

The Ocean's tide, and the Leucadian rock : 15

And now they passed the gateways of the sun,

And by the land of dreams ; and soon arrived

Descending, at the meads of Asphodel,—

The dwelling-place of spirits, and of shades

Of mortals who have ended all their toils. 20

And there they found the ghost of Peleus' son,

And of Patroclus and Antilochus ;

Of Ajax also, who in comeliness

And manly beauty all the Grecian chiefs,

Except renowned Achilles, far excelled. 25

Around Achilles thronged these heroes' shades ;

And Agamemnon's ghost drew near to him,

In sorrow ; and around him gathered were

His followers, who in Ægisthus' halls

Together with him fell, and shared his fate. 30

And first Achilles' ghost thus spake to him :

“O Atreus’ son, we deemed that evermore
Of mortal heroes thou wouldst ever be
The favoured one of Jove the Thunderer :
For that o’er many gallant chiefs thou heldest 35
The regal sway, in the far Trojan land ;
Where we, the Greeks, so many ills endured.
And yet, before thy time, awaited thee
A dreadful death ; death none of us may shun.
But oh that thou hadst met thy death and doom 40
Amid our Trojan foes, in the full blaze
Of all thy honour and thy regal sway !
Then all the Greeks had raised to thee a tomb,
And to thy son had fallen a glorious name,
A heritage of fame : but ’twas thy lot 45
To perish by a miserable death.”

And thus Atrides’ shade to him replied :
“Godlike Achilles, happy Peleus’ son,—
Happy, though thou didst die afar away
From Argive soil, at Troy ; for round thee fell 50
Trojans and Greeks, the bravest of the brave,
Fighting for thee : midst whirling clouds of dust
Thy mighty bulk was stretched upon the earth,—

A mighty fall!—forgotten then thy skill
To guide the chariot in the path of war. 55
All day we fought for thee,—the livelong day;
Nor did we cease from strife till Jove himself
Drove us from battle with his furious storm:
Then from the fight we bore thee to the ships,
And laid thee on the bier; and cleansed away, 60
With tepid water and anointing oil,
The stains of battle from thy glorious form.
Shedding hot tears, the Greeks bewailed thy loss,
And cut their waving locks to strew thy bier,
Thy mother came, soon as she heard thy fate, 65
With her immortal sea-nymphs, from the deep:
And from the waters rose a cry of woe
Terrific, which struck terror o'er the Greeks.
In fear they rushed towards their roomy ships,
To launch them; but a hero them restrained, 70
One skilled in varied and in ancient lore,
Nestor, who oft before his counsel proved.
He in his wisdom shouted out, and said:
'Halt, Argives; stay your flight, ye Grecian youths:
This is our hero's mother coming now, 75

With her immortal sea-nymphs, from the deep;
Fear not; she comes to visit her dead son.'

"He spake, and stilled the terror of the host.

The daughters of the aged sea-god stood,
And cast immortal garments round thy corse, 80

Lamenting bitterly; the Muses nine,

With their bewitching voices, all in turn

Chanted thy dirge, each one to each replying:

Not one among the Greeks was tearless then,

While rose and fell again the tuneful wail. 85

And thus Immortals joined with mortal men,

For seventeen days and nights, to sing thy dirge;

And on the eighteenth, to the fire we gave

Thy corse; and in thy honour sacrificed

Oxen with crumpled horns, and fatted sheep. 90

And thou in garments which the goddess gave

Wast burnt, with unguents and with honey sweet:

And as thy funeral pyre arose in flame,

The heroes of the Greeks, in armour clad,

In numbers round it marched with solemn tread, 95

On foot and in their chariots; around

Swelled high the mighty shout of thy farewell.

And when the fiery flame had thee consumed,
Achilles, at the dawn thy whitened bones
We gathered, with pure wine and unguents sweet. 100
Thy mother gave to us a golden urn,
With double handles; it was said to be
The gift of Bacchus, and by Vulcan wrought:
In this thy bones were laid, O noble chief,
Mixed with the ashes of Menætiās' son, 105
Patroclus, thy dear comrade: but the dust
Of young Antilochus was kept apart;
Whom of thy comrades thou didst honour more
Than all the rest, saving Patroclus' self.
And over these we raised a mighty tomb, 110
We the devoted host of warrior Greeks;
Which on a jutting promontory stands
By the broad sea, anear the Hellespont:
So that afar, across the distant wave,
It may be seen by all men living now, 115
And who in future ages may be born.
And then thy mother beauteous prizes begged
The gods to give, that she might offer them
In contest to the noblest of the Greeks.

Thou hast been present at the funeral rites 120
Of many heroes; thou hast seen the youths
Gird and prepare themselves to join in games,
To grace a mighty monarch's obsequies;
But thou hadst gazed with wonder, hadst thou seen
The glorious prizes which the goddess gave, 125
Thy mother Thetis of the gleaming feet:
For very dear wast thou to all the gods:
Thy name shall never perish; e'en in death,
Achilles,—ever shall thy glorious fame
Endure for future ages among men. 130
But what delight to me has fame to give,
That I played out the mighty game of war?
Since Jove decreed for me on my return
A' dreadful doom to suffer, at the hands
Of fell Ægisthus and my fiendish wife." 135

As thus with one another they conversed,
The guiding Argus-slayer them approached,
And nearer to them came; and brought with him
The suitors' ghosts, now by Ulysses slain.
These gazed with wonder, and went up to them: 140
The shade of Agamemnon knew at once

Amphimedon, the son of Melaneus,

For he had been his host in Ithaca.

And first the ghost of Atreus' son thus spoke :

“Tell me, Amphimedon, by what mischance 145

Ye came together to this shadowy land,

Ye choicest youths, all of one time of life?

If one should seek the noblest in the state,

His choice would fall on ye, and none beside :

Did Neptune raise a furious hurricane 150

And billowy waves, and drown you in your ships?

Or fell ye on the land before the foe,

Making a foray on his herds and flocks,

Or fighting for his city and its spoil?

Tell me who question thee, thy sometime guest : 155

Dost not remember, there in Ithaca,

How I with Menelaus to thy home

Came, to persuade Ulysses us to join,

And sail with us to Ilium with his fleet?

For a whole month we stayed, ere on our voyage 160

We further sailed across the distant deep :

'Twas hard to win Ulysses to our cause,

Who cities and their strongholds overthrows.”

The ghost of prince Amphimedon replied:

“ Renown’d Agamemnon, king of men, 165

All this I well remember, noble chief:

And I will tell to thee the truthful tale

Of our most grievous death; how it befell.

“We all were suitors to Ulysses’ wife,

Who then had long been absent from his

home: 170

She did not quite refuse our proffered suit,

Though hateful to her, nor did she accept it ;

But craftily plotted our death and doom.

This stratagem moreover she contrived:

A mighty loom was in her chamber placed,— 175

Broad and extensive was its web, and fine,—

This she began to weave, and said to us:

‘ Young princes, suitors mine, I you implore,

Though dead my husband be, that ye refrain

From urging on my nuptials till this robe 180

I shall complete, lest all the threads be wasted,—

Intended for Laertes' winding-sheet,

When death with its long sleep shall overtake

The aged hero; for the Grecian women

Would cast reproach on me, should he so rich 185
Lie, like a pauper, shroudless in his grave.'

 'Thus spake she, and we frankly acquiesced,
And day by day she laboured at the loom ;
But every night by torchlight she unwove
The work by day accomplished. Three years long 190
She thus deceived us ; when the fourth was come,
And glided on the hours, as months slipped by,
And very many days had passed away,
One of her maids who knew told us the tale.
Her we discovered as the beauteous web 195
She was unweaving : after this, her task
Compelled she finished, much against her will.
And when the robe was woven and complete,
And washed, she straightway showed it us ; it shone
As bright and brilliant as the sun or moon. 200
And at that very time some evil fate
Ulysses guided—whence he came, I know not—
To a far distant spot in Ithaca,
Where in the upland fields a swineherd dwelt ;
And thither came the chief's beloved son 205
From sandy Pylos, in his black-hulled ship ;

And there these two plotted our death and doom.

Then both of them to the famed city came :

Telemachus came first, and afterwards

Ulysses followed ; him the swineherd brought 210

In sorry garments clad, and in the guise

Of an old wretched beggar he appeared,

Tottering upon his staff, in ragged garb.

And when he thus appeared so suddenly,

Not one among us knew him, who he was ; 215

Not those who elder were and might have known :

But with hard words and blows we him received,

And for a time he all our scoffs and blows

In his own halls with stubborn patience bore,

Until the will of ægis-bearing Jove 220

Aroused him ; when he with Telemachus

Removed the beauteous weapons from the hall,

And locked with bolts the room in which he placed them.

Then prompted he his wife with wondrous craft

To lay a bow and axes of grey steel 225

Before us suitors, fated to our doom,

As for a peaceful match of rivalry ;

In truth, the harbinger of death to us.

There was not one of us could string the bow :
Vast was the lack of lustihood we showed. 230
But when within Ulysses' hands was laid
The mighty bow, we shouted out aloud,
Exclaiming not to give the bow to him,
For all his asking ; but Telemachus
Alone insisted he should have the bow. 235
Ulysses then, the patient godlike chief,
Took in his hand the bow, strung it with ease,
And shot an arrow through the axes' helves.
Then to the threshold of the hall he sprang,
And poured the feathered arrows on the ground, 240
Terrible glances casting round at us :
And first he smote the prince Antinous,
And then he rained with his unswerving aim
His deadly shafts on all the rest of us,—
In ranks we fell ; one of the gods, 'tis known, 245
As an avenging helper stood by them :
With headlong fury through the hall they raged,
And smote us right and left ; direful the groans
Of those who fell, struck down with cloven skulls ;
And the whole floor and pavement reeked with blood. 250

“Thus, Agamemnon, did we meet our doom;
And now uncared for, in Ulysses’ halls
Our bodies lie: for those most dear to us,
In our own homes, know nothing of our fate;
Or they would wash away the foul dark stains 255
Which mark our wounds, and lay us on the bier,
And weep for us with rites due to the dead.”

To him the shade of Atreus’ son replied:

“Happy Laertes’ son! thou, versed in wiles,
Happy art thou, that thou hast such a wife, 260
Gifted with every virtue: such is she,
Thy chaste Penelope, Icarus’ child;
Her soul by nature turned to purity.
She ne’er forgot the husband of her youth,
Her own Ulysses: therefore the renown 265
Of her true constancy shall never die;
And the Immortals shall inspire a song
Which aye shall charm the dwellers of the earth,
The witching tale of chaste Penelope.
Not so Tyndareüs’ daughter,—she designed 270
A fearful crime; the husband of her youth
She slew: and therefore shall the hateful tale

Of her atrocious crime be ever sung ;
Which piles foul shame upon her gentle sex
For ever, be they e'er so virtuous." 275

So thus with one another they conversed,
As 'neath the secret places of the Earth
They in the dim domain of Hades stood.

Meanwhile Ulysses and the rest went forth,
Descending from the city to the plain ; 280
And now they reached Laertes' fair domain,
Which he had won in war with many toils.
There stood his house, and all around it lay
Outbuildings of his farm, where all his thralls,
Who did his 'hests and laboured at his will, 285
Were wont to eat, and sojourn, and abide.
There a Sicilian aged woman dwelt,
Who tended carefully the aged chief,
Far from the city in his country lands.

Then to his son and to the herdsmen twain 290
Ulysses thus addressed his speech, and said :

"Now go ye all within the fair-built house,
And for our meal slay ye at once a boar,
The choicest there ; and ready make for us :

But I would fain my father seek, and prove 295
If he still know me, and take note of me,
On seeing me ; or if he now have lost
All memory of the long-absent one."

Thus spake the chief, and to his servants gave
His warlike weapons ; and they went within. 300
And to the fruitful vineyard he drew near ;
And as he down the spacious orchard passed,
He found not Dolius there, nor yet his sons,
Nor any of the slaves ; for they had gone
To gather thorny stakes to hedge the vines, 305
The old man, Dolius, directing them.

But in the terraced vineyard all alone
He found his father, digging round a plant.
A dirty tunic, patched in sorry guise,
He wore ; and leggings round his knees were bound 310
Of patched ox-hide, to shield him from the thorns ;
Coarse gloves to guard his hands from briar and
brake,

And cap of goatskin on his head he bore :
In this unseemly garb he nursed his grief.
And thus Ulysses, the enduring chief, 315

Beheld his father then; worn out with age,
And with a mighty woe within his heart.
Apart from him, beneath a pear tree tall
He stood and wept, and doubted what to do :
Whether embrace and throw his arms around 320
His aged father, and tell him at once
How he had now returned and reached his home
Or whether first to try and question him.
And this to him in doubt appeared the best,
To prove him first of all with bitter words : 325
And so the godlike chief went up to him ;
But the old man, with head bent to the ground,
Was digging round the plant, and heeded not.
His noble son stood near him, and thus spake :
 “Old man, no lack of skill in husbandry 330
Thy orchard shows; it has thy watchful care :
No tree of any kind, or fig or vine,
Olive or pear, or border plot of flowers,
Throughout thy garden, is without thy care.
But this I say, and be not vexed thereat, 335
’Tis thou thyself who lackest tender care ;
And, with the burthen of thy sad old age,

Unkempt thōu art, and sorry in thy garb.
It is not for thy slothfulness, I ween,
Thy master thee neglects, nor is there aught 340
Of servile in thy stature and thy mien;
Right royal is thy port: thou seemest one
Who after bath and banquet should lie down,
And softly sleep in a luxurious couch,
As aye should be the meed of revered age. 345
But prithee tell me this, and truly say,
Whose thrall art thou? whose garden dost thou tend?
And tell me this beside, that I may know:
Is this in sooth the land of Ithaca
Whose shores I now have reached, as told me now 350
One whom I chanced to meet as I arrived?
He showed but little sense, it seemed to me,
This man I met; for he could not reply,
Nor understand me when I questioned him,
About a friend of mine: if yet he lived 355
And still was in existence, or had died
And to the shadowy land of Hades gone.
Now thee I ask, if thou wilt list and heed:
In my dear native land, there was a man

Who came to us, and whom I entertained; 360

None of the strangers who from distant shores

Came to my home was dear to me as he:

He claimed his lineage of Ithaca,

And told me also that his father's name

Laertes was, son of Arceisius; 365

And him I entertained right bounteously,

Of all the plenteous stores I had at home;

And gifts presented, fitting such a guest.

I gave him seven talents of pure gold,

A bowl of solid silver, wrought with flowers, 370

Twelve cloaks with single folds, twelve coverlets,

As many beauteous robes, and tunics too;

Besides four comely women, all well skilled

In cunning work, whom for himself he chose."

His father, shedding tears, to him replied: 375

"Stranger, thou now hast reached the very land

For which thou askest; but, alas for it!

Here proud and lawless men now hold the rule.

Thy many gifts and all thy kindness

Were thrown away: but had he been alive, 380

And hadst thou met thy friend in Ithaca,

He would have sent thee home requited well,
For all thy gifts and hospitality;
Just meed for him who kindly acts begins.
But tell me truly now, how many years 385
Have passed away since thou didst entertain
Him thy unhappy guest, my wretched son?
Who was my son, alas! whom far away,
Far from his loved ones and his native soil,
The fish have eaten in some stormy sea, 390
Or beasts, or noisome birds, on some lone strand:
And him no mother with a tender hand
Nor father laid within his grave, bewept.
His gentle wife, wooed with so many gifts,
The chaste Penelope, could ne'er bewail 395
Her own dear husband; nor could close his eyes
With all the rites, to the departed due.
But tell me truly now,—I fain would know,—
Who art thou, where thy state, and who thy kin?
Where is the galley moored which brought thee hither,
Thee and thy gallant crew? or didst thou come 401
A passenger on board some strangers' bark,
Who set thee on the shore, and sailed away?"

Crafty Ulysses answered in reply :

“ All this I will with truth to thee relate : 405

I am from Alybas,—there is my home,

With lofty echoing halls ; I claim to be

Apheidas' son, from Polypèmon sprung,

Epèritus my name ; against my will,

And off the course I fain would steer, some god 410

Has hither driven me from Sicily :

Hauled high upon the beach my galley lies,

Far from the city. As for him thy son,

Ulysses, now the fifth year has arrived

Since from my native land he sailed away : 415

Ill-fated one ! and yet, with omen good,

The birds flew from the right as he departed :

And so rejoicing I took leave of him,

And he rejoicing went upon his way ;

And in our hearts we hoped to meet again, 420

And splendid gifts in friendship to exchange.”

As thus he spake, a stormy cloud of woe

Swept o'er the aged man ; with both his hands

He clutched the ashy dust, and poured it out

Upon his hoary head, with heavy groans. 425

Ulysses' soul was stirred; a tingling pang
Shot through his nostrils, as he thus beheld
His father so beloved; he forward sprang
And hung about him, kissing him, and said:

“O father, I who speak to thee am he, 430
Thy very son; and in this twentieth year
I now have reached at last my native land.
But stay thy weeping and thy tearful groans:
I tell thee as I needs must tell in haste,
That I have slain the suitors in my halls, 435
And I have taken vengeance on that crew,
For their misdeeds and grievous injury.”

To him Laertes answered in reply:
“If thou Ulysses art in very deed,
And mine own son, who now hast hither come, 440
Give me some proof that cannot be denied;
Tell it me now, that I may trust thy words.”

Crafty Ulysses answered in reply:
“First with thine eyes behold the cicatrice,
Which marks the wound which with his gleaming
tusk 445

The boar on Mount Parnassus gave to me,

When I went thither: I was sent by thee
And by my lady mother to her sire,
Autolycus, that I might fetch the gifts
Which he had promised with a faithful vow, 450
That he would give me, when he hither came.
And I will tell thee too the very trees
Thou gavest me throughout this terraced slope,
When I was but a child, and at thy heels
I followed thee along the garden ground, 455
Asking thee this and that; and as we walked
Among the trees, thou toldest me their names,
And didst describe them, and thou gavest me
Pear trees thirteen, ten apple trees beside;
Of fig trees forty: thou didst promise too 460
To give me also fifty rows of vines,—
Each in succession bore its crop of fruit;
And when the seasons by the will of Jove
With heavy clusters load the teeming boughs,
In every stage of ripeness do they hang.” 465

Thus spake he: melted then Laertes' heart
And sank his limbs, as thus he recognised
The proof unfailing of Ulysses' tale.

He threw his arms around his darling son :

The suffering chief, Ulysses, on his breast 470

Sustained him swooning ; when his breath returned,

And life came rallying to his heart again,

He straightway in these words exclaimed, and said :

“ O Father Jove ! there verily are gods

Who dwell in high Olympus even now, 475

If that vile crew have paid for all their crimes ;

But in my soul I have a mighty dread,

Lest all the men of Ithaca as foes

Should burst upon us suddenly ; and send

Tidings of all that has befallen here, 480

Throughout the cities of the Cephallenæes.”

The chief of many wiles to him replied :

“ Have courage, thou, and in thy inmost soul

Nourish no anxious care for all these things :

But turn we now our steps towards thy house, 485

Which near the orchard lies ; where I have sent

Telemachus, with him the herdsmen twain,

That they may ready make our morning meal.”

And with these words they sought the palace fair ;

And there they found Telemachus ; with him 490

The herdsmen twain, who now the viands curv'd ;
And in the bowl they mix'd the sparkling wine.

The old Sicilian handmaid straightway then
Attended at the bath the dauntless chief,

Laertes, and anointed him with oil, 495
And o'er his shoulders cast a beauteous robe.

Pallas drew near the shepherd of the folk,
Herself, and on his limbs the sinews swelled,
And more majestic made his port and mien.

And when he issued from the bath refreshed, 500
His cherished son with wonder gaz'd at him ;
Like an immortal god he seem'd to be ;
And with these wing'd words he him address'd :

“ O father, one of the immortal gods
Has surely made thy form more glorious, 505
Thy stature grander than it was before.”

To him the wise Laertes thus replied :

“ If Father Jove, Apollo, and Minerva
Had but vouchsafed that in our palace halls
I only yesterday had stood by thee, 510
In armour sheathed, to help thee hold thine own
Against the suitors, as I was of yore,—

When, ruling o'er the Cephallenæ, I took
The well-built fastness Nericus, which stands
Strong on a jutting point of the mainland,— 515
Then had I smitten many to their knees,
Within our halls; and in thy breast, I ween,
Thy heart had glowed to see me in the fray."

As thus with one another they conversed,
The others had the banquet ready made, 520
And rested from their task: in order due,
On couches and on chairs they took their seats.
As they were ready then to lay their hands
On the good cheer, the aged Dolius
Came with his sons, a-weary of their toil; 525
Their aged mother, the Sicilian dame,
Had called them: she it was who brought them up,
And tended the old man with loving care,
Now that old age had seized him in its grasp.
And when they looked Ulysses in the face, 530
And knew him, they stood silent in the hall,
Dumb with amazement; but with kindly words
Ulysses then addressed them all, and said:

"Old man, sit down, thy wonder cast aside;

We have been waiting long for ye to come, 535
Hungering to lay our hands upon our food."

He spake, but Dolius rushed up to him,
With arms outstretched, and seized him by the arm,
And kissed his hand, and spake these wingèd words:

"Welcome, right hearty welcome, master dear, 540
Since thou hast now returned to us at last,
Who long have yearned for thee, but long had lost
All hope to greet thee: sure the gods themselves
Have been thy guides, and may they grant thee bliss!
But tell me truly now,—I fain would know,— 545
If chaste Penelope have learnt the news
Of thy return? or shall we send to her?"

Prudent Ulysses thus to him replied:

"O trouble not thyself, for all she knows."

He spake, and Dolius straight sat him down: 550
And when his sons welcomed the famous chief
With kindly words, and clasped him by the hand,
They by their father also took their seats.

Thus in the hall these busied with their meal:
But Rumour went a flying messenger, 555
Throughout the city everywhere, to tell

The story of the suitors' death and doom.
At once the people heard the news and came,
Rushing in eager haste from every side,
With cries and groans before Ulysses' halls. 560
They from the palace carried forth their dead,
And buried them; and from the cities round,
The others sent by fisher-folk to bring
The corpses home, on board their galleys swift.

And then the people, grieving in their hearts, 565
In crowds to council went; and when they met,
And when they all together gathered were,
Eupeithes rose, and first addressed them all:
For grief unceasing lay about his heart,
Grief for his son, for his Antinous, 570
The first to fall before the godlike chief:
His tears he mingled with his words, and said:

"Belov'd friends, this man has crime on crime
Contrived and plotted 'gainst the Grecian folk:
For many were the heroes true and brave 575
He took with him on board his roomy ships.
His ships he lost; with them their gallant crews:
Then he returns to us, and slaughters here

The very bravest of the Cephallenes:

But now, ere he betake himself to flight, 580

To Pylos, or to Elis the divine,

Which the Epeians hold beneath their sway,

Let us attack him. Shamefaced we should be,

Disgrace would ever after cling to us,

If for the murder of our kith and kin 585

We did not vengeance take; to me in sooth

Life were no longer sweet without revenge:

For rather would I lie amidst the dead.

But up, and at our enemies at once,

Ere they escape from us across the sea." 590

Thus spake he, weeping; pitied him the Greeks;

But Medon and the godlike minstrel came

Forth from Ulysses' palace, and drew near,

As soon as slumber left them: in their midst

They stood. Amazement fell on all of them 595

To see them thus escaped; when Medon spake:

"Now list to me, ye men of Ithaca:

'Tis not without the purpose of the gods,

Ulysses has accomplished these great deeds:

For I myself,—I saw a god divine, 600

Who by Ulysses stood in Mentor's form;
And the immortal god was manifest
Encouraging Ulysses by his side,
Bewildering the suitors: through the hall
He stormed in fury, and in heaps they fell." 605

He spake; wan fear seized all who heard his words.
The aged hero, Halitherses, then
Addressed them, son of Mastor; he was skilled
In ancient lore, as well as prophecy;
He, in his wisdom ripe, addressed them thus: 610

"List also, men of Ithaca, to me:
Believe me, friends, all this has fallen on you
Through your own faults; ye were not ruled by me,
Nor yet by Mentor, shepherd of the folk,
To check the senseless follies of your sons. 615

Vile was their crime—infatuate for ill:
Wasting the goods, dishonouring the spouse,
Of him the noble chief; in the false hope
That he would ne'er return: he has returned.
And now at last be ruled by my advice: 620
Let us not go against the chief, for fear
We draw upon ourselves a greater ill."

He spake; and with a mighty shout they rose,
The greater half of them: the rest remained,—
Not to their minds was Halitherses' speech, 625
But rather by Eupeithes they were swayed:
To arms they rushed, and donned their gleaming mail.
In the wide plain beyond the city walls
In numbers they assembled: at their head,
Eupeithes in his folly led them on, 630
Who thought he would avenge his slaughtered son,
But who was fated never to return,
But there upon the field to meet his doom.

Meanwhile Minerva to almighty Jove,
Son of the Ancient One, these words addressed: 635
“O Father—Saturn's son, great king of kings,
Deign to reply to me who ask of thee:
What is the purpose of thy secret soul?
Yet further wilt thou stir up evil strife,
And battle's fearful din? or gentle peace 640
Wilt thou decree for both the jarring sides?”

And Jove, who piles the thunder-clouds, replied:
“My daughter, wherefore dost thou question me?
For hast thou not thyself contrived this scheme,

That thus Ulysses should return at last 645

And retribution take? Do as thou wilt;

But I will tell thee what me seemeth best:

Since now Ulysses has avenged his wrongs,

Let them make covenant with sacrifice;

And let Ulysses be their king for aye. 650

And we will bring about forgetfulness,

For all the slaughter of their kith and kin;

And let them live in friendship as of yore,

With peace and wealth ever in plenteous store."

These words Minerva, eager ere he spoke, 655

More eager made; and from Olympus' peaks

She to the earth came swooping in her flight.

When they who feasted in Laertes' halls

With grateful food and wine were satisfied,

Ulysses, the enduring chief, thus spake: 660

"Let one now issue forth and look around,

For fear our foes attack us unawares."

Then up got Dolius' son at his behest,

And to the threshold went he hastily:

And thence he saw them all, then drawing near; 665

And to Ulysses spake he winged words:

"The foe is now upon us; arm at once."

He spake, and up they sprang, and donned their
mail:

Four were there with Ulysses there in arms;

Six sons of Dolius beside them stood: 670

Laertes and the aged Dolius

Also must needs upon their aged limbs

Gird on their armour, spite of their old age:

And when they all were sheathed in gleaming bronze,

They open threw the gates and issued forth, 675

And them Ulysses marshalled to the field.

Then Pallas' self drew nigh, the child of Jove;

The form and voice of Mentor she assumed.

The godlike chief rejoiced to see her near,

And thus addressed his son Telemachus: 680

"Telemachus, thou now shalt learn thyself,

Where the brave mingle in the ranks of war,

Not to disgrace thy father's noble race;

Which ever heretofore has been adorned

With valour and undaunted hardihood." 685

Telemachus, the prudent youth, replied:

"Dear father, thou shalt see me if thou wilt,

In naught disgracing by my 'haviour here

All that thou tellest of thy noble race."

Laertes joyed to hear his words, and said: 690

"How glorious a day is this for me!

Kind gods, when now my son, and my son's son,

In valour here contend before my eyes."

The blue-eyed goddess then drew near, and said:

"Son of Arceisius, my dearest friend, 695

Pray to the blue-eyed Maid and Father Jove;

And swing aloft thy spear, and hurl it straight."

Thus spake Minerva, and a mighty force

She breathed upon the aged hero's limbs:

Then prayed he to the child of mighty Jove, 700

And, swinging his long-bafted spear aloft,

He launched it straightway, and Eupeithes smote

Right on the brazen cheek-plate of his helm,

Which warded not the blow, but through and through

The brazen weapon drove, and with a crash 705

He fell,—his armour rattled on his limbs.

And then Ulysses and his noble son

Fell on the foremost ranks, and smote them down

With their sharp swords and double-headed spears:

And they had smitten all their enemies,— 710

Not one of them had 'scaped the field of death,

But for the child of ægis-bearing Jove,

Pallas; who shouted with her mighty voice,

And with these words restrained the warring host:

“Cease, men of Ithaca, this rugged strife, 715

And part ye now with no more blood-shedding.”

Thus Pallas spake, and they were wan with dread,

And fell their weapons from their trembling hands,—

Fell to the earth at the dread goddess' voice;

And fled they to the city for dear life. 720

And then Ulysses, the enduring chief,

Shouted aloud his dreadful battle-cry,

Gathering himself to rush upon the foe,

As soars the eagle high for his dread swoop.

Then Saturn's son launched forth his flaming bolt, 725

And let it fall before the blue-eyed Maid;

And she, the daughter of the awful sire,

The blue-eyed goddess, to Ulysses spake:

“Son of Laertes, fertile in resource,

Halt; stay the strife of even-handed war, 730

Lest Jove all-seeing angered be with thee.”

Thus spake Minerva : he obeyed with joy ;
And she, the child of ægis-bearing Jove,
In Mentor's figure and with Mentor's voice,
Established faithful covenants and oaths 735
On either side, to bind them aye to peace.

THE END.

LONDON :

PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED,
STAMFORD STREET AND CHARING CROSS.

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